This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

AH 6K2Y 3

HARVARD DEPOSITORY
SPECIAL COLLECTION
CIRCULATION RESTRICTED

Digitized by Google

Harvard Divinity School

ANDOVER-HARVARD THEOLOGICAL
LIBRARY

GIFT OF
Conrad Wright

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Elizabeth C. Ware.
1868.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE

FOUR GOSPELS:

WITH A

COMMENTARY.

BY

ABIEL ABBOT LIVERMORE.

VOLUME I.

MATTHEW.

SECOND EDITION.

BOSTON:
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.
LONDON:
JOHN GREEN, 121 NEWGATE STREET.
1842.

Digitized by Google

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1841, by
ABIEL ABBOT LIVERMORE,
in the Clerk's office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

CAMBRIDGE:
STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY
METCALF, KEITH, AND NICHOLS,
PRINTERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

In bringing this work before the public, it will be proper to say something respecting its origin and object, and the principles on which it is based. The expositions and criticisms it contains were substantially given, in the first instance, in the lecture-room, and in meetings of Sabbath-school teachers; and only the repeated expression, on the part of friends, and by the public journals of our faith, of the pressing want of a popular commentary on the Scriptures, of a different complexion from those chiefly in use, has called them forth from the retirement in which they germinated.

If the Author wished to deprecate criticism, it would be sufficient to say that he has performed his task amidst professional cares and labors, which, though not altogether unpropitious to such an enterprise, in some respects, yet break in upon that continuity of interest and of thought, essential to the most successful intellectual or spiritual efforts. He would simply ask that the mantle of Christian charity may be thrown over those minor errors in fact, style, and opinion, which are incident to a divided attention of the mind. Of other and graver ones, if such there be, he would bear the responsibility as he best can, grounded on the consciousness of upright motives, and appealing to the common Master and final Judge, to whom we all stand or fall.

Gift
Rec'd 11/4/06

Digitized by Google

It is not, of course, the design of this work, prepared as it has been for general readers, to present the processes and details, so much as the results, of Biblical criticism, in a plain and direct manner; to exhibit, if possible, the kernel of the wheat, rather than the stalks and husks in which it grew and ripened, though the one may have been often mistaken for the other. This method, however, gives an abruptness and baldness in some instances to the work, which are only excusable on account of the restricted limits of a popular exposition.

The same cause has led to the blending of several distinct elements, which in most commentaries have been more or less distinguished from each other by difference of location or type, but which are here compounded, or, as some may think, confounded together. It may be observed, in passing, that later expositors have generally shown an inclination to this mode. In accordance with it, a verbal criticism upon the text, and occasional corrections of the English translation and paraphrases, — details of history, biography, manners, and customs, — accounts of ancient opinions, popular and philosophical, — evidences of the genuineness and veracity of the Gospel records, and of the divine authority of Christianity, — doctrines and duties inferred from the text, — poetical illustrations, — and general remarks of a practical and devotional character, interspersed as the spirit of composition dictated, — are combined upon the same page. To have separated these component parts, more or less formally, and to have arranged them respectively under the heads of Paraphrase, — Notes, — Comments, — Practical Observations, — Illustrations, — would have increased the work to a disproportionate size, and given it a stiff and cumbrous character, by no means desirable. The living frame is formed by the harmonious union of seemingly discordant substances, liquid and solid, — flowing blood, and tremulous nerve, and rock-like bone. So to have mingled the needful qualities and materials of a commentary, as to secure unity amid variety, and spiritual life and impulse among criticisms and calculations, dates and facts, will undoubtedly prove

Digitized by Google

to have been rather the ideal excellence aimed at, than the result actually attained. The general spirit manifested, in any work whatever, affects us more deeply than single sentences or precepts. Hence practical remarks and inferences are of less real effect, probably, when summed up by themselves, than when diffused throughout the exposition; for, coming as a moral at the end of a fable, they are likely to be passed over either with formality or neglect. We are most profited by them when they are of a suggestive rather than a preceptive nature; when they point the way to a field where we may ourselves reap or glean, rather than reap or glean for us.

The marginal references, commonly embraced in a work of this kind, are excluded on the simple ground that they are so little consulted as to be nearly useless, and also because they are liable, unless most judiciously selected, to foster erroneous associations and interpretations, and make analogies and connexions between portions of Scripture, where none really exist. The author has endeavored to shun this evil, but cannot hope to have done so entirely, for it is ingrained into a great part of the theology of the past. The few references which he has made in the body of the Notes he earnestly begs may be always consulted without exception, for they are designed to corroborate his arguments, or illustrate and enforce his conclusions, and may often shed an unexpected light upon a dark spot. If a Bible is constantly at hand, passages may be referred to without delay, and Scripture made to act in some degree as a self-interpreter.

The Introductions, and Calendar of our Lord's Ministry, are inserted to aid the general reader in his Scriptural inquiries.

The invaluable Harmony of the late lamented Dr. Lant Carpenter, of Bristol, England, has been mainly followed in this work. According to his theory, which was the earliest one received by the Christian church, the period of our Lord's active ministry extended over one year and a few months. Besides the support of antiquity, he finds reasons for this view in the facts of the case, as detailed by the evangelists, and

Digitized by Google

maintains his opinion in a cogent and well-reasoned dissertation, contained in the abovementioned work.

The doctrinal sentiments of the following commentary will be identified as Unitarian; but let it be understood, that no church, creed, society, sect, or name, only the writer, is responsible for them. They may agree with others or not; they should be adjudged according to their own merits, or demerits, at the bar of truth. If erroneous, they will perish, and the sooner the better; but if true, they must eventually prevail, however slowly they make headway against the general current. What is asked is, that they may not be condemned without a hearing, nor examined without candor, nor admitted without reason and discrimination.

In the preparation of these Notes, the aid of critics and commentators has been as extensively sought as circumstances would allow. The words of Jesus might be applied: "Other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors." Some of the authors mentioned in the note * have been consulted, some read, some studied, and several quoted; while others have been used incidentally, or at second hand, which are omitted.

Lord Bacon, in his work on the Advancement of Learning, where he speaks of the theology of his day, remarks, "that if the choice and best of those observations upon texts of Scriptures, which have been made dispersedly in sermons, within

* The Versions and Editions of Luther, Griesbach, Bloomfield, Tyndale by Dabney, Beza, Sacy, Wakefield, Campbell, Thompson, Cappe, Palfrey, Bradford, and the Improved Version; the Commentaries of Poole, Fratres Poloni, Pearce, Hammond, Le Clerc, Lightfoot, Henry, Whitby, Goadby, Paulus, Rosenmüller, Kuinoel, Olshausen, Doddridge, Scott, Priestley, Cappe, Clarke, Kenrick, Dabney, Townsend, Trollope, Barnes, and Ripley; MS. Notes of the excellent Lectures of Norton and Palfrey; Calmet's Dictionary; the Pictorial Bible; Robinson's Lexicon; the Septuagint; Josephus, Eusebius; the Works of Haynes, Gerard, Symonds, Knapp, Winer, Hug, Horne, Bishop Hall, Watson, West, Newcome, Burder, Hannah Adams, Abbott, Greenwood, Ware, Furness, Cellerier, Bulfinch, Allen, W. J. Fox, Schleiermacher, Ballou, Farmer, Milman, T. B. Fox, Robinson, Spear; the Trial of Jesus, by Dupin; the Scriptural Interpreter, and other valuable periodicals.

Digitized by Google

this your Majesty's island of Britain, by the space of these forty years and more, leaving out the largeness of exhortations and applications thereupon, had been set down in a continuance, it had been the best book in divinity which had been written since the Apostles' times." Agreeably to this suggestion, it has been the object of the following work to draw remarks from other sources than set commentators; to resort for this purpose to sermons, essays, poems, and stories. Books not specially intended for expositions often contain most valuable hints; in particular, the periodicals of the day embody some incomparable dissertations and comments on the sacred writings; in proof of which, among many instances, we need but refer to an article in the (English) "Christian Teacher" for January, 1841, on Matt. xi., John's message to Jesus; which was copied into the "Christian Register" of February 13, 1841. The remarks of Dr. Channing on this point are worthy of attention. "Commentators have their use, but not the highest use. They explain the letter of Christianity, give the meaning of words, remove obscurities from the sense, and so far they do great good; but the life, the power, the spirit of Christianity, they do not unfold. They do not lay open to us the heart of Christ. I remember that a short time ago I was reading a book, not intended to be a religious one, in which some remarks were offered on the conduct of Jesus, as, just before his death, he descended from the Mount of Olives, and amidst a crowd of shouting disciples looked on Jerusalem, the city of his murderers, which in a few hours was to be stained with his innocent blood. The conscious greatness with which he announced the ruin of that proud metropolis and its venerated temple, and his deep sympathy with its approaching woes, bursting forth in tears, and making him forget for a moment his own near agonies and the shouts of the surrounding multitude, were brought to my mind more distinctly than ever before; and I felt that this more vivid apprehension of Jesus was worth more than much of the learning in which commentators abound."

Digitized by Google

The Text used in this work is the Received Text, printed in paragraphs, according to the arrangement of Griesbach, and chiefly with his punctuation.

The occasional repetition of the same explanations and remarks is partly attributable to the interrupted method of composition unavoidable in a case where many authorities are consulted, and partly to the advantage of repeating what has been before said, rather than of occupying quite as large a space in making a reference to a previous passage.

Touching the general difficulties of forming a true and earnest commentary on the sacred writings, the author has become fully apprized in the progress of his labors. If, as some have contended, the interpretation of the Bible were a matter to be decided simply by the rules of philology, by the grammar and lexicon, the liabilities to error would be very much diminished. But it is far otherwise. All our philosophical and theological views, all our habits, principles, and sentiments, our constitutional and acquired peculiarities, have a bearing upon our apprehension and explanation of each sentence. Biblical criticism puts under levy the whole existing amount of our knowledge and experience. Our views of the nature of God, his Providence, his Son Jesus Christ, of Man, of Life, of Futurity, will tinge with their own hues every verse. Our theories and practices sway us hither and thither, like grass in the wind, however determined our resolution to forget ourselves and yield with unprejudiced hearts to the pure impressions of Truth. Hence it is questionable whether creeds do not often exert more influence to dispose men to certain interpretations of the Bible, than does the Bible to modify creeds. Petrifactions are wont to gather around the fount of life, and to shape and impede the free jet and course of the waters, and therefore do the storms and overflowings of reformations come to break down and wash away these incrustations, that the streams may run in their native channels, pure, refreshing, and fertilizing.

The expositor is in constant danger of marring the high and

Digitized by Google

holy beauty of the Ancient Thought by the intrusion of his modern factitious associations; of separating the pure light into the more striking but less natural colors of which it is combined; of making the short long, and the long short, on his Procrustean bed; of spreading his own parti-colored mosaic over the simple corner-stone of Christ, or "daubing it with untempered mortar." It seems to be the object of some commentators to put as much into a text, or get as much out of it, as they can. They infer all the doctrines and duties of Christianity from a verse in the Pentateuch, or a parallelism in Proverbs, and justify their whole creed, however irrational, by an obscure phrase in the book of Revelation. Hence a learned divine of the last century, in a Latin epigram, written in a Bible, said, that it was a book, "where every one sought his own opinions, and where every one found them." The sarcasm is not without point. One denomination of Christians has been accused of using a Bible of its own, different from that of others. The charge was untrue in its common acceptation, and unsupported by facts. But in reality, not one, but all sects have Bibles of their own, because all have their own interpretations of the volume. In this sense the Baptists have their Scriptures, and the Presbyterians theirs, and the Trinitarians, and Unitarians, and Swedenborgians, theirs. As Cecil said, "Men labor to make the Bible *their* Bible." And they succeed; for the Bible is to each one the sense, the thoughts, the doctrines, which he draws from it, and attaches to it. So that when we enumerate the varieties of Christian belief, we begin to think that the old Talmudists were not so much out of the way, who assigned to each text of Holy Writ seventy-two faces.

The origin of these diversities may be illustrated in the following way. When we look at the heavenly bodies we look through two atmospheres, both of which will affect the vision; first, that of the earth, and secondly, that of the distant sun or star. So in studying the word of God, we are obliged to view it through *our* atmosphere, and *its* atmosphere; our atmosphere of prejudice, interest, and passion; and its atmos-

Digitized by Google

phere of dead languages, ancient manners and customs, and obsolete opinions, which envelopes the great ideas of prophet and evangelist. Now the power of the commentator is restricted chiefly to clearing away, as far as may be done now after the lapse of centuries, the latter haze. He must seek to interpret his text in the spirit in which it was spoken or written. He must see with the eyes, and hear with the ears, and understand with the hearts of the men of old, place himself in their situation, and live over again their victories and defeats, their joys and agonies. He must enter the house of Joseph, and see him make himself known to his brethren, and shed tear for tear with him. He must mix with the furious multitude that rushes forth upon Mount Calvary, and catch a distant glimpse of the meek and undaunted Sufferer, and listen to his clear and sweet tones of love and pity, which are poured out like oil upon the sea of rage and scorn that dashed around him. The interpreter must become for the time the actor whose deeds he would explain, the speaker whose words he would illustrate and enjoin. But to revert to the former comparison, — the atmosphere of our own minds cannot be much affected by the commentator; that must be clarified by self-culture, and the purifying influence of virtue. If we would find the truth, the condition is, to love and seek the truth.

It is the fashion with some to despise Biblical learning, and to assert that the Scriptures shine best in their own light. No doubt they do, if we are assured that it is their own light, and not some false meteoric ray. No doubt we may put up too many critical glasses to our eye, and obscure, rather than brighten or magnify into their true and immense size, the eternal principles of religion. Still, the naked eye is often materially aided in bringing them near, in all their sublime magnitude and unearthly glory, by the telescope of sacred criticism; though they may twinkle with sufficient brightness, even to the most unassisted sight, to designate the great moral points of compass, and to guide the voyager home over the waters to his haven of rest. There are obscure allusions, ancient customs,

Digitized by Google

peculiar idioms, unusual figures, — the venerable drapery of Truth, — which may often be so explained as to increase our interest in and our knowledge of the word of God. And surely it is not the part of wisdom to reject even those inferior instruments by which the principles of the Gospel are placed in their clear, bold relief, and due perspective.

But, with this difference of estimation attached to scriptural learning, there can be no difference of opinion as to the great end to which all biblical studies and criticisms should ultimately reach, the quickening of man in the spiritual life. His dim and broken conceptions of truth are to be brought nearer into harmony with the Divine Archetype. His low and weak character is to be exalted and invigorated, so that he shall live the life of God in his soul, so that Jesus Christ shall be formed within him. The same desire for man's salvation, that caused the glad tidings of the Gospel to be originally sent abroad over the earth, should still inspire the heart of the philologist and critic, and sanctify all his labors. May it not be added, with all due deference to his most profound attainments in sacred learning, that this desire of human good is the most important qualification for his office? It has been thought, with justice, that the increased knowledge of ancient languages, arts, manners, and opinions, enjoyed in our day, has illuminated the sacred page with a new light. But have not the moral and spiritual movements of the present age, the great principles of Freedom, Toleration, Peace, Union, Temperance, that begin to stir in the hearts of men, and to shake the kingdoms of the world, done as much or more? From the struggle for his rights, from the sacrifices of philanthropy, from the efforts of reform, has not man gone to the volume of Truth, with a newly couched eye, to see the length and breadth and depth of its immortal principles? In other words, can the Scriptures be understood or explained truly, except in the same enlarged spirit of love to God and man in which they were composed? Then must the interpreter be imbued with the spirit of benevo-

Digitized by Google

lence and piety, as well as conversant with Hebrew and Greek, to discharge his office.

It was the far-reaching observation of Robinson, the Puritan Pastor, at that eventful crisis in human affairs, when he dismissed, with religious solemnities, from the shores of the Old World, the pioneers of liberty and religion to the New, that "the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy Word," and he besought them to remember it as an article of their church covenant, that they should be ready "to receive whatsoever light or truth should be made known to them from the written Word of God." Since he bade farewell to that immortal company, freighted with the seeds of a new empire and a new world, and with noble forecast directed them to act worthily as the founders of a new church, it is believed that more light has broken forth from God's word as well as from his works. It is believed that the red rays of the morning, the early beams, shooting aslant a cloudy horizon, and betokening wrath and vengeance, and filling men's hearts with the chills of fear more than the fervors of love, have been succeeded by the white light of broad day, the warm and cheering radiance of an unclouded Gospel.

Every religion retains for a time the characteristics, and breathes the spirit, of that which preceded it. Thus Judaism slowly emerged from idolatry, until the One God was at last worshipped without rival. Thus has Christianity risen out of the bosom of Judaism, and has long retained the family likeness.

Even now, notions, essentially Jewish, or Heathen, predominate in the Christian body. To what source, but to Jerusalem or to Rome, shall we assign the doctrine of Sacrifice, as spiritually atoning for human sins; the overweening importance attached to forms, and meetings; the belief that men could sin before they were born (John ix. 2); the greater estimation given to inferred, than to declared doctrines; and the exclusive spirit which says, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou"?

Digitized by Google

But the gilded pomp of Pagan and of Papal worship, the superstitions and fears of brahmin and monk, are slowly vanishing.

"One spell upon the minds of men
Breaks, never to unite again."

The contracted Hebrew age of Christianity is also passing away. The sceptre is departing from Judah. But let the sheet-anchor of that elder dispensation, the inviolable Unity of God, in which the Jews were disciplined for fifteen hundred years to trust, still hold us from drifting away into mists and mysticism. With that central principle, the additional disclosures of the Gospel, the fatherly character of the Almighty, mildly reflected in his Son, beaming with mercy towards the penitent sinner, inviting his children to glory and immortality, and the brotherhood of man with man everywhere, beautifully harmonize. These truths are great, and they will prevail. Not more surely does the mighty sun mount the steep of heaven in his strength, burning up the vapors of night, blazing with his awful glories, and quickening all things into life, than will these everlasting principles rise above all sectarian enclosures, enlighten in due time the whole moral world, and vivify all souls with the spirit of the living God.

If the following pages should become instrumental, in the remotest degree, in hastening this consummation, the labor bestowed upon them will not have been in vain. If they should, by the favor of God, prove useful to the Sabbath-school teacher in his disinterested efforts; to his pupils in their faithful studies; to the parent in the religious education of his family; and to the inquirer after truth and duty, of whatever age or office; if, in the quaint, but expressive language of an old writer, they should be found to contain "the slip for use, and part of the root for growth," the most fervent desire of the author will be satisfied; but if it should be otherwise, none will greet more cordially than he a better work to supersede his own.

To those friends who have cheered and aided him in his task, and favored him with the loan of necessary books, he would

Digitized by Google

take this opportunity of rendering his most grateful acknowledgments.

If life and health are spared, a second volume, containing an exposition of Mark, Luke, and John, will be published early in the next spring.

KEENE, N. H., *May*, 1841.

Digitized by Google

GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

THE *New Testament* is the received collection of books written by the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ. The more appropriate title would be, the *New Covenant*, as it contains the *covenant* or *compact* made with mankind by God through his Son, and designed to supersede the preliminary and partial covenant with the Jews. These books are also called *canonical*, from *canon*, *a rule*, because they are believed to contain the authoritative rule of faith and practice. At what time, or by whose authority, they were first collected together, cannot now be determined. Probably no formal step was taken to effect it; but gradually those works that found most favor among the early Christians, because they were known to have been written by inspired apostles and disciples of Christ, were admitted into the Canon by common consent. Those that were rejected fell into a class called Apocryphal, which bears the same relation to the New Testament that the books of Esdras, Maccabees, and others, do to the Old.

The writings of the New Testament all date back to the first century, between A. D. 40 and 98, or even narrower limits. They were composed in the Greek language, which was then generally spoken in the East. One or two books, however, have been conjectured by many critics to have been written in a dialect of the Hebrew tongue; but if so, they were very early translated, and no copies in the original now remain. Catalogues of the Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation, with their present titles and authors mainly, are given by the Christian Fathers of the second and third centuries. Numerous quotations are also found in their writings, by which the text may often be corrected or verified. The Scriptures were generally read in the churches, diffused through different countries, and translated into foreign languages; by which means their authority was more fully substantiated, and their uncorrupted preservation insured.

Digitized by Google

But for fifteen centuries, copies were only multiplied by the long and laborious process of writing. A very high degree of accuracy, however, as well as elegance, was in general attained by the ancient copyists, as is evinced by the manuscripts extant in our day. The monks of the first and middle ages were not without their use in preserving and extending, amid violence and darkness, the lights of classic antiquity, and the immortal records of the Gospel. But the people were so sunk in ignorance, and the price of manuscripts was so high, that comparatively few owned the Scriptures. In the fourteenth century, a copy of Wickliffe's New Testament cost about eighty dollars.

When the art of printing was invented in the fifteenth century, one of the first publications was the Bible. Its extensive diffusion by this means powerfully accelerated the Reformation of Luther, and placed in his hands an engine by which he was more than a match for all the wealth and terrors of Rome. The ignorance of the times was so gross, however, that he was accused, in his active exertions with his fellow-reformers to circulate the Scriptures, of being the *author* of a pernicious work, entitled the New Testament.

The Sacred Books were not originally divided into chapters and verses, and agreeably to the ancient mode of writing, were destitute of any marks of punctuation. Cardinal Hugo, in the thirteenth century, arranged the Latin Vulgate in chapters, which have been essentially retained in our English Bibles. The division into verses was made by Robert Stephens of France, in an edition of the New Testament issued in 1551. He performed the operation at leisure moments, while on a journey from Lyons to Paris, and therefore under circumstances precluding much reflection or accuracy. Yet his arrangement has been always adhered to, and the sense of Scripture has been not a little marred by its being printed, as if crumbled up into independent fragments, or consisting of unconnected propositions and maxims, instead of a continuous composition. In the present work, as in the Common Version conformed to the Standard Text of Griesbach by Dr. Palfrey, and as in the Bibles of Nourse and Coit, this evil has been shunned by throwing the verses into the side margin, and printing the page in a solid column, with paragraphs, divided according to the sense.

Early translations were made into the Saxon and English, as well as other languages. About A. D. 706, the Psalms were translated into Saxon by a bishop called Adelm. Bede, "the venerable," who flourished in the beginning of the eighth century, made a Saxon version of the whole Bible. One of the earliest efforts at an English translation was commenced in the latter part of the ninth century, by King Alfred the Great, the patron of learning and religion among his rude people, but he died in the

Digitized by Google

midst of the work. Others entered the same field; but the most successful step was taken by Wickliffe, who rendered the whole Bible into English, about 1380.* He was called, on account of his commanding influence at that benighted period, the Apostle of England, and the Morning Star of the Reformation. The opposition against him rose, however, to such a pitch, because he labored to enlighten the great mass of the people, that he was obliged to flee into foreign parts. But he finally returned and died in peace. Forty years after, the old papal hatred broke out afresh; his bones were dug up and burnt, and the ashes thrown into the nearest brook. The people were forbidden to read the Bible in English, and many were persecuted, and some were put to death, because they were guilty of doing it.

The translation of William Tyndale, the first New Testament in English ever printed, came out in 1525.† This possesses great merits. The author was martyred by the Romish power, near Brussels, in September, 1536. A fine, accurate edition of this work, enriched with "the essential variations of Coverdale's, Thomas Matthews' (supposed to be a fictitious name for John Rogers, the Smithfield Martyr), Cranmer's, the Genevan, and the Bishops' Bibles, as marginal readings," has been issued in this country, by Mr. Dabney. In general, the versions just mentioned, which came out after Tyndale's, were of a high order, and contained some of the fruits of the best learning of their day.

In the commencement of the seventeenth century, James the First, king of England, committed the work of a new translation to fifty-four learned men of his kingdom, seven of whom died, or declined the labor. The result of their studies was published in London, in 1611, and constitutes our present received version of the Holy Scriptures. They followed, in many cases, their predecessors, above mentioned, and where they varied from them, they did not always vary for the better. Criticisms upon, and amendments of, their renderings have been made not unfrequently in the subsequent Notes. For, since the work was executed, the

* A specimen of Wickliffe's Version. Matt. v. 1–5. "And Jhesus seynge the people, went up into an hil; and whanne he was sett, his disciplis camen to him. And he openyde his mouthe, and taughte hem; and seide, Blessid be pore men in spirit; for the kyngdom of hevenes is hereun. Blessid ben mylde men; for thei schulenweelde the erthe. Blessid ben thei that mournen; for thei schal be comfortid."

† A specimen of Tyndale's Version. Matt. v. 1–5 "When he sawe the people, he went vp into a mountayne, and when he was set, his disciples cam vnto hym, and he openned his mought, and taught them saynge: Blessed are the povre in sprete: for theirs is the kyngdome off heven. Blessed are they that morne: for they shalbe comforted. Blessed are the meke: for they shall inheret the erth."

Digitized by Google

English tongue has undergone some changes, and words then current are now obsolete. The ancient languages and sacred antiquities have been more profoundly investigated, and the light of new researches and discoveries has since their day been shed upon the pages of inspiration. Strongly bound as they were to a peculiar, and, as is believed, now waning system of theology, they occasionally let their doctrinal biases appear in the work. There is also a want of uniformity in the phraseology of different portions, attributable to the employment of many translators. But, consecrated as this version has been by the antiquity of its use, its acknowledged excellence on the whole, and the unanimity of its adoption by all sects of Christians, it has commanded a respect but little short of that paid to infallibility and inspiration. Its rhetorical merits are undoubtedly great, and no book has been a richer or purer repository of the sound old Saxon virtues of our tongue. But the imperfect Greek text on which it was grounded, together with the reasons above stated, obviously suggests the need of its revision, or of a totally new translation in its stead, if we would possess the Word of God in its greatest uncorruptness and simplicity.

For, since King James' day, besides the invaluable results of philology, sacred antiquities, and history, as explanatory of the Scriptures, the most fruitful and important critical researches have been carried on by Mill, Bengel, Wetstein, Matthäi, Alter, Birch, and especially by the celebrated Griesbach. But while their patient collation of manuscripts, versions, and fathers, has yielded many thousands of various readings of the Greek original, yet, as almost all of them are of minor consequence, they have materially strengthened the pillars of our faith in the Christian Scriptures. They have demonstrated that the sacred records have been preserved with an uncommon freedom from gross corruptions, more so than the classic works of antiquity, and in a purity, indicating that the providence of God, through the instrumentality of man, has watched over their preservation under the most disastrous circumstances, and brought out of dark and distant ages this great light of truth, to shine with undimmed splendor, and to spread over all coming generations.

Digitized by Google

CALENDAR OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY.

BY LANT CARPENTER, LL. D.

[The precise dates are of course conjectural, but the general outlines of the table are based upon historical facts. N. B. The Jewish Sabbaths are marked ◊.]

A. D. 29.

Jan. 20. BAPTISM OF JESUS: after this, he retires to the Desert, for forty days.

Feb. 28. The Priests and Levites come to John from the Sanhedrim.

Mar. 1. Christ returns to the Baptist, and receives his testimony.

—— 2. John, Andrew, and Peter follow Jesus.

—— 3. Philip and Nathanael become disciples of Jesus.

—— 7. FIRST MIRACLE, at Cana.

—— 8. Our Lord goes to Capernaum, which was thenceforward his ordinary residence.

—— 19. The FIRST PASSOVER begins: during the festival, our Lord drives the traders from the Temple, and converses with Nicodemus.

—— 27. Christ exercises his ministry in the country of Judea.

Apr. 22. Conference with the Samaritan woman at Sychar.

—— 27. Jesus, while at Cana, heals the youth lying ill at Capernaum.

May 8. The PENTECOST begins.

—— 14. ◊ The cure of the infirm man at Bethesda.

—— 15. Christ departs for Galilee, where he remains till the FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

—— 21. ◊ The walk through the cornfields.

—— 28. ◊ Christ rejected at Nazareth.

June. During these months, our Lord appears to have been occupied in preparatory instruction in the synagogues of Galilee;

July. occasionally employing his miraculous powers; but awaiting the fit season, and the signal given by the imprisonment of

August. John, to commence the public announcement, and the series of wonderful works, which immediately afterwards ensued.

Digitized by Google

Sep. 13. The Feast of Tabernacles begins. A little before this, probably, the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod Antipas.
—— 16. Our Lord reaches Jerusalem.
—— 19. "The last day, the great day of the feast."
—— 20. Our Lord gives sight to the blind man. He then goes to Galilee.
—— 23. Christ begins his Public Preaching. Call of Peter, &c.
—— 24. § Cure of the demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum.
—— 25. First Progress through Galilee.
Oct. 16. Our Lord delivers the Sermon on the Mount, heals the leaper, &c.
—— 17. The widow's son at Nain raised from the dead.
—— 20. The tempest stilled, in crossing the Lake, and the demoniacs restored to sanity, on the eastern shore, in the district of Gadara.
—— 21. Cure of the paralytic at Capernaum, and call of Matthew.
—— 23. The day of Matthew's feast. (The 22d was a Sabbath.)
—— 24. Christ selects the Twelve, and begins his Second Progress through Galilee.
Nov. 20. Mission of the Twelve into Galilee.
—— 21. The disciples of John come to Jesus. The visit to Simon the Pharisee.
—— 22. Mission of the Seventy into the Perœa.
—— 25. The visit to Martha and Mary at Bethany.
—— 26. § Conference with the Jews near the close of the Feast of Dedication.
—— 27. Jesus withdraws to Bethabara, east of the Jordan.
Dec. Jesus exercises his ministry in the Perœa; and there probably many of the Seventy rejoin him, as also some of the
Jan. Twelve.
A. D. 30.
Jan. 20. The Resurrection of Lazarus, at Bethany.
—— 22. The Sanhedrim resolve to kill Jesus, and he withdraws to Ephraim, in Samaria, till the death of the Baptist.
Feb. 15. Jesus leaves Ephraim, to return to Galilee, on the death of John.
—— 18. § Cure of the man with the withered hand.
—— 19. Cure of the dumb demoniac. The Day of Parables.
Feb. 25. § Last visit at Nazareth, after which our Lord teaches in the neighboring villages, and the rest of the apostles collect together to him.
Mar. 4. The infirm woman healed in the synagogue, on the Sabbath.
—— 5. Miracle of the Five Thousand, near Bethsaida Philippi.
—— 6. Discourse, the day following, in the synagogue at Capernaum.

Digitized by Google

Mar. 7. Departure for the region of Tyre and Sidon.
—— 9. Cure of the Syrophœnician woman's daughter.
——11. Our Lord again near Bethsaida in Philip's dominions.
——14. Miracle of the Four Thousand.
——15. Cure of the blind man at Bethsaida of Galilee.
——17. Avowal of Peter near Cæsarea Philippi.
——25. ◊ The TRANSFIGURATION, in the northern part of Galilee.
——27. The Temple tribute paid at Capernaum.
——29. Having been refused reception by the Samaritans, Christ enters the Peræa.
——31. Crosses the Jordan in the afternoon, and passes the Sabbath near Jericho.
Apr. 1. ◊ Jesus visits Zaccheus at Jericho.
—— 2. *Sunday*. Our Lord arrives at Bethany: the supper at the house of Simon.
—— 3. *Monday*. Public entry into Jerusalem: Voice in the Temple.
—— 4. *Tuesday*. Miracle on the barren fig-tree: the Temple cleared.
—— 5. *Wednesday*. The last day in the Temple: prophecy on the Mount of Olives.
—— 6. *Thursday*. Christ at Bethany: in the evening he goes to Jerusalem. (The Paschal Supper.)
—— 7. *Friday*. The CRUCIFIXION.
—— 8. *Saturday*. The (Jewish) Sabbath. The sepulchre sealed, and a guard set.
—— 9. *Sunday*. Before sunrise our Saviour left the tomb; and, not long after, was seen by Mary Magdalene.
——18. Second visit to the apostles, Thomas being present.
May.— Christ appears to the apostles, and perhaps at the same time to the Five Hundred Brethren, on a mountain in Galilee.
——18. The ASCENSION OF CHRIST, near Bethany.
——27. The PENTECOST. The communication of the Holy Spirit to the apostles.

Digitized by Google

TABLES.

[CHIEFLY TAKEN FROM ALLEN'S QUESTIONS, PART I.]

Money mentioned in the New Testament reduced to Federal Currency.

	dolls.	c.	m.
A Mite, (*Leptum*, Mark xii. 42, Luke xii. 59)			2
A Farthing, (*Quadrans*, Matt. v. 26, Mark xii. 42)			4
A Farthing, (*Assarium*, Matt. x. 29, Luke xii. 6)		1	5
A Penny, (*Denarius*, Matt. xx. 2, Mark xiv. 5)		14	0
A Piece of Silver, (*Drachm*, Luke xv. 8)		14	0
Tribute Money, (*Didrachm*, or half-shekel, Matt. xvii. 24)		28	0
A Piece of Silver, (*Stater*, or shekel, Matt. xxvi. 15)		56	0
A Pound, (*Roman Mina*, Luke xix. 13)	13	88	8
A Talent of Silver, (Matt. xxv. 15) about	1,500	00	0
A Talent of Gold, about	24,000	00	0

Measures of Length mentioned in the New Testament.

	miles.	rds.	ft.	i.
A Cubit, (John xxi. 8) about			1	6
A Fathom, (Acts xxvii. 28) about			7	4
A Furlong, (Luke xxiv. 13, John xi. 18) about		44	3	7
A Jewish Mile, (Matt. v. 41) about		292	15	0
A Sabbath Day's Journey, (Acts i. 12) about	¾	000	00	0
A Day's Journey, (Luke ii. 44)	20 to 30	000	00	0

Measures of Capacity mentioned in the New Testament.

A Firkin, (*Metretes*, John ii. 6) probably about 7½ gallons, though some say 9 gallons.
A Measure, (*Satum*, Matt. xiii. 33) 1 peck, 4 quarts.
A Roman Bushel, (*Modius*, Matt. v. 15) 1 peck.
A Cor, (*Corus*, or homer, Luke xvi. 7) about 14 bushels.
A Pot, (*Sextarius*, Mark vii. 4) about 1½ pint.
A Bath, (*Batus*, Luke xvi. 6) 7½ gallons.
A Measure, (*Chœnix*, Rev. vi. 6) about one quart.

Seasons of the Year in Palestine.

1. Seed Time, corresponding to our October and November.
2. Winter, " " " December and January.
3. Cold Season, " " " February and March.
4. Harvest, " " " April and May.
5. Summer, " " " June and July.
6. Hot Season, " " " August and September.

Digitized by Google

INTRODUCTION

TO THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

MATTHEW, or Levi, the son of Alpheus, was probably a native of Galilee. Little is recorded of him in the New Testament. He was called by our Lord to be one of his twelve apostles, as he sat at the receipt of custom in Capernaum, in the discharge of his duties as a publican, or tax-gatherer. He immediately left all, and followed the Messiah. Those who collected the Roman revenues in Palestine were held in great odium and ignominy by the Jews, and loaded with every opprobrious name. But Jesus hesitated not to mingle with this abhorred class, and even to choose one as his apostle, as if the better to demonstrate his reliance upon a power more than human, which could employ the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

The period of Matthew's discipleship and remaining life appears to have passed without note. Uncertain traditions existed in early times that he preached the Gospel in Parthia and Ethiopia, and fell as a martyr at Naddaber, in the latter country. But the single illustrious monument that remains of him is the following work. This towers simple and majestic over the ruins of time, and bears the name of the once despised publican down to the latest posterity.

His character, as we gather it from the brief data of history, and the style, structure, and spirit of his Gospel, was marked by decision, sterling honesty, and straight-forwardness. He showed his meekness in recording himself as one of a hated and ignominious calling; and his modesty in forbearing to state that the feast which took place after he was called by Jesus, was due to his hospitality. The marks of his unswerving truth and honest independence are traceable throughout his work.

He is generally supposed to have written his Gospel before the others, and hence it has always been placed first. At what exact period it was composed is unknown. Some critics assign it to A. D. 38 or 41, while others, with more probability, conjecture it to have been written as late as A. D. 61 or 64. The great authority of Lardner is in favor of the last date.

Matthew is believed to have used the Hebrew language in the original composition of his Gospel; or rather a mixed dialect termed Aramean, or Syro-Chaldaic, made up of Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Syriac, — our Saviour's vernacular tongue. According to Eusebius, it is stated by Papias, who lived about A. D. 100, that "Matthew composed his history in the Hebrew dialect, and every one translated it as he could;" and by Irenæus, A. D. 190, that "Matthew, then among the Hebrews, published a Gospel in their own language; whilst Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel,

Digitized by Google

and founding a church at Rome." Eusebius himself says, that "Matthew, having first proclaimed the Gospel in Hebrew, when on the point of going to other nations, committed it to writing in his native tongue, and thus supplied the want of his presence to them by his writings." No copy of this Gospel, however, is now extant in the Aramean, or Syro-Chaldaic language. All existing manuscripts are in Greek. The translator of the work from the original into Greek is unknown.

The Gospel of Matthew was written and circulated particularly in Palestine, and was designed by its author to exhibit Jesus to the Jews as their Messiah, who had been so long predicted, and so eagerly expected. Hence he often quotes from their sacred books in the way of illustration, and to show the fulfilment of ancient prophecies, thus enlisting in the cause of the Gospel their national feelings and religious associations. As he wrote for the Jews, he takes less pains than Mark, who wrote for the Latin Christians, to explain the manners, customs, opinions, ceremonies, and geography of the country.

"The Gospel of Matthew," says Dr. Carpenter, "from the Temptation to the Last Journey to Jerusalem, is essentially Galilean. During that interval, he gives no intimation of occurrences in any part of Palestine, but Galilee and its borders."

"Great brevity in the relation of facts, and detail in the record of discourses, are two of the characteristics of St. Matthew's Gospel. His manner is calmly earnest throughout; and it has the impress of deep conviction and certain knowledge. He gives a clear, but compressed summary of the transactions which he relates; entering but little into the *circumstances* of each; yet tracing the main fact distinctly and forcibly. For this style of composition, his official duties had, it is probable, peculiarly qualified him; that it is his style is not to be disputed."

The writer above quoted considers Matthew's order of events, in respect to chronological arrangement, as preferable to that of the other evangelists, though there are exceptions in some places. The devotion of thirty years, with more or less application, to the study of the Four Gospels, entitles his opinions to a candid attention.

The first two chapters of Matthew, the passage contained in chap. xxvii. verses 3–10 inclusive, and the latter clause of verse 52 and the whole of verse 53, in the same chapter, are deemed by some critics, chiefly out of respect to the internal evidence as weighed in their judgments, to be interpolations. But the external evidence from manuscripts, versions, and the early fathers, was not of such a nature as to lead Griesbach to reject either of the passages from the text, or to place it under a mark of inferior authority. And his decisions, so far as that kind of testimony is concerned, have been admitted with great unanimity by almost all critics of every denomination.

Digitized by Google

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

CHAPTER I.

The Genealogy and Birth of Jesus Christ.

THE book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of
2 David, the son of Abraham. —— Abraham begat Isaac; and

1. *The book of the generation.* The table of the genealogy, or the catalogue of the ancestors. This is probably not the title of the whole Gospel, but the heading of the first chapter, or, more likely, of the first seventeen verses. See Gen. v. 1, xi. 10; Ruth iv. 18. The Jews were very careful to preserve their genealogies. Copies of them were kept at Jerusalem, and handed down hundreds of years. This was done, in addition to the desire common to all men of knowing their ancestry, in order to distinguish the tribes and families from each other, to secure the fulfilment of the laws respecting marriage, and the rights of succession to offices and estates, and to afford the means of ascertaining in what tribe the Messiah was born. Priests who had not kept their lineage accurately were degraded from their office. Ezra ii. 62; Neh. vii. 64. Eusebius, the earliest ecclesiastical historian, mentions, on the authority of Africanus, a tradition that Herod the Great committed the Hebrew genealogies kept in the public archives to the flames, that he might conceal his ignoble extraction, but that they were restored either by recollection, or by private copies. The public documents were utterly destroyed in the sack of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the nation by the Romans, A. D. 70. Other nations have prided themselves upon their genealogies. The Welsh pretend to carry theirs back to Adam. — *Jesus.* Saviour; the same as Joshua. Jesus is the Greek, and Joshua is the Hebrew form of the word. Joshua is called Jesus in Acts vii. 45; Heb. iv. 8. — *Christ.* Anointed. The same in Greek as Messiah in Hebrew. Dan. ix. 25. Priests, Prophets, and Kings were anointed as a sign of induction into their respective offices. Exodus xl. 15; 1 Kings xix. 16. It was usual among the Orientals to give significant names to their children. Our Lord was a *Saviour* to the world, as he came to rescue and preserve men from sin, and a Messiah, or Christ, an Anointed one, to the Jews, as succeeding in some sense to their Kings, Priests, and Prophets, combining their offices in his commission, and fulfilling the old propheeies. — *Son of David, &c.* Descendant of David and Abraham. It was essential that the Messiah should be able to trace his ancestry to these distinguished persons, so venerable to the Jewish mind. Matthew was writing to Jewish converts, and he writes in accordance with their feelings. It is generally supposed that he gives the descent of Joseph, the reputed father of Jesus. Whilst Luke, writing for Gentiles, traces the pedigree of Jesus from Mary through her father Heli, through Nathan, David, and Abraham, back to Adam, the ancestor of both Jews and Gentiles. Luke iii. 23 – 38. Their lists are different, but not contradictory. They drew them no doubt from the same archives at Jerusalem. If then the genealogies are inaccurate,

Digitized by Google

Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren.
And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar. And Phares 3
begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; and Aram begat 4
Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat
Salmon; and Salmon begat Booz of Rachab. And Booz be- 5
gat Obed of Ruth. And Obed begat Jesse; and Jesse begat 6
David the king. And David the king begat Solomon of her
that had been the wife of Urias. And Solomon begat Roboam; 7
and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; and Asa be- 8
gat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat
Ozias; and Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; 9
and Achaz begat Ezekias; and Ezekias begat Manasses; and 10
Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; and Josias 11
begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were
carried away to Babylon. — And after they were brought to 12
Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zoro-
babel; and Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Elia- 13
kim; and Eliakim begat Azor; and Azor begat Sadoc; and 14
Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; and Eliud be- 15
gat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat
Jacob; and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of 16

---

which is improbable, for they were never impugned in early times, the error is chargeable upon the original records, not upon the Evangelists who copied them.

2. *Judas and his brethren.* His brethren are mentioned because they with Judah were the heads of the twelve tribes. In this genealogy some names are altered from the Hebrew to the Greek orthography, as Judah to Judas, Hesron to Esrom, Azariah to Ozias.

3. *Phares and Zara.* The latter introduced because he was a twin. Genesis xxxviii. 27. The names of several women are mentioned on account of remarkable events in their lives, by which their posterity are identified.

8. *Joram begat Ozias.* Three names, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, 1 Chron. iii. 11, 12, are here omitted, perhaps to make the number between David and the Babylonish captivity just fourteen, and thus render the list more convenient to remember, or because there was a curse denounced against the house of Ahab, to which these princes belonged; Ozias, therefore, was the great-grandson of Joram.

11. Between Josias and Jechonias came Jehoiakim. 1 Chron. iii. 15.

13. *Zorobabel.* Here terminates the line as recorded in the Old Testament. The rest was drawn from later tables, or tradition.

16. *Of whom.* This pronoun is in the feminine gender in Greek, referring then not to Joseph, but to Mary. Jesus was the actual son of Mary, but only the reputed, or legal son of Joseph, and in that way the descendant of Joseph's ancestry. —

Digitized by Google

17 whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. —— So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ *are* fourteen generations.

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came to-
19 gether, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make

---

Called Christ. This was added in the public record to distinguish him from others of the same name. Col. iv. 11.

17. *Abraham, — David, — Carrying away into Babylon.* These were three prominent points in the Jewish history, and by attaching just fourteen names to each division, the memory was aided in retaining the genealogies. To make this number good, David and Josias have to be counted twice, once at the beginning, and once at the end of the periods in which they are respectively mentioned. These generations were on an average a little more than forty years in length. The usual period assigned now is thirty years. A generation is longer as we go back farther into antiquity. — *Carrying away into Babylon.* The original signifies migration, change of abode; a milder word, used in accommodation to Jewish feelings, instead of transportation, exile. 2 Chron. xxxvi. This took place in the reign of Zedekiah, B. C. 605. Babylon, the splendid seat of the Assyrian and Chaldean empires, was situated in a large fertile plain on both sides of the river Euphrates, somewhat more than 600 miles, nearly east, from Jerusalem. Its stupendous walls, 87 feet thick and 350 feet high, were 60 miles in circumference, and entered by 100 gates of solid brass. Its temples, palaces, bridges, and hanging gardens, were the wonder of the world. But hardly a vestige of it now remains. Nebuchadnezzar then sat upon the throne. The children of Israel were held captive seventy years, but returned to Judea in the reign of Cyrus, Ezra i. 1, 2; and rebuilt their temple in the reign of Darius Hystaspes. Ezra vi. 15.

18. *Birth.* Nativity. Having traced his descent, the Evangelist goes on to relate the circumstances of his birth. Luke i. ii. — *On this wise.* Old English for *in the following way.* — *When as.* Whenas, at the time when; now obsolete. — *Espoused.* Betrothed, engaged. Even young children were sometimes espoused to each other by their parents. Among the Jews, unfaithfulness during an engagement was deemed as heinous as after marriage. Deut. xxii. 23, 24. — *Of the Holy Ghost. Of* is frequently used for *by* in our version of the Scriptures, and in old English writers. The Holy Ghost is not a distinct person, as is implied by printing it in capitals, but the holy breath, spirit, influence of God. The simple idea is that it took place by divine power, according to the divine counsel. For other instances of miraculous creation, or conception, see Genesis ii. 7, 22, xxi. 2; Luke i. 57.

19. *A just man.* Conscientious. The word *just* implies rectitude of

Digitized by Google

her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the 20 Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying: Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall 21 bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins. (Now all this was done, 22

feeling in this place, rather than rectitude of principle. — *Not willing, &c.* Such was his rectitude, or propriety of feeling, upon this trying occasion, that he was not only unwilling to cause her to be punished by the rigor of the law, but even to subject her to public ignominy. He was reluctant to expose one whom he loved, even in her supposed guilt, and injury to himself, to death, or to shame. — *Was minded.* A private divorce, according to the laws of the Jews, could be made in the presence of two witnesses, without reasons being assigned for it, or disgrace being incurred. A divorce was as necessary in a case where the parties were only espoused, as where they were actually married; and they were as much called husband and wife before marriage as after. See verses 16, 20. Joseph's affection prompted him to put her away without publicly stating the cause, or exposing her to the severity of the law. Deut. xxiv. 1. Cases occur where it is the part of justice not to push the laws of justice to extremity.

20. *While he thought on these things.* This argued a commendable deliberation. Supposing himself to be grievously wronged, yet he did not act rashly, but exercising the beautiful wisdom of patience, he met with its rich reward. Time and docility will clear up the darkest perplexities. — *Behold.* Lo. A word used in the Classics and the Scriptures to denote the approach of something extraordinary, and to awaken attention. — *Angel.* A messenger. An angel is any instrument or form of the divine communication. This title is given to men, to beings of other spheres, to fire, storms, winds, plagues, and other modes by which God either publishes or executes his will. Gen. xxviii. 12; Exod. iii. 2, with Acts vii. 30; Psalms lxxviii. 49; Acts xii. 23; Psalms civ. 4; Rev. i. 20. Angel is often the name of an office, not of a distinct person, or conscious intelligence. — *A dream.* A frequent mode of divine communication in the elder ages, but it can be called little short of superstition to suppose that this sort of miracles is continued to the present day, and to put reliance upon the unchecked and grotesque wanderings of the imagination in sleep, as necessarily descriptive either of our duty or fortunes. — *For that which is conceived.* This was the reason why he should not hesitate to marry her. She had committed no crime, the conception was miraculous.

21. *For he shall save, &c.* That entitles him to be called Saviour. He saves men in a twofold manner, as affording a preventive and a remedy; as rescuing them from sins already committed, and restraining them from committing more. But he saves none against their will, none without their efforts; saves none *in* their sins, but only *from* their sins. — *His people.* All men who believe in him and become his disciples. He came to

Digitized by Google

that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the
23 prophet, saying: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and
shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanu-
24 el;" which, being interpreted, is, God with us.) Then Joseph,
being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bid-
25 den him; and took unto him his wife, and knew her not till

put all mankind *in the way of salvation*, for so the word signifies, to lay the foundation of a kingdom of virtue and holiness as extensive as the race, as lasting as the earth. This aim he most diligently pursued in all his discourses, during his whole life, and by his exemplary death. To the last painful breath on the cross, to the last word at his ascension, he never wandered from the furtherance of this great plan. This is the key of his life and death, — that he came to save men *from* their sins; not the consequences merely, but from sin itself.

22. *That it might be fulfilled, &c.* *That* is not to be taken in the sense of cause, or intention, but of the event. The birth of Jesus did not take place in order that the words of Isaiah might be verified, but so that they were verified. The thing was done for its own sake, not for the sake of fulfilling Isaiah's words, though, as it was, it did fulfil them. Again, we have an instance here of what is called *Accommodation*. The words of Isaiah did not relate to the birth of Christ, but to something which happened in the reign of Ahaz. The prediction had long before been fulfilled. But Matthew quotes it in the way of an illustration, as if he had said, "the ancient saying was made good, or verified; the passage in Isaiah well describes these events." Is. vii. 14.

23. This and the preceding verse are parenthetical. They are the comment which Matthew makes upon the angel's message. — *Behold a virgin, &c.* This prediction was originally made by the prophet Isaiah, and was accomplished in the days of Ahaz, one of the kings of Israel. — *Emmanuel.* Composed of two Hebrew words, meaning *God*, and *with us*, i. e. God helpeth us. This signifies divine interposition in favor of Ahaz against his foes, an appropriate title for Jesus, but one which is not applied to him anywhere else in the Bible. The Jews were accustomed to form and apply appellations indicative of God's goodness, and compounded of his name. Thus, Bethel, *house of God*, Elijah, *God the Lord*. If the application of the word Emmanuel, God with us, to Jesus Christ, proves that he is God, as some hold, it might be argued just as strongly that the application, for instance, of the word Elijah, which means God the Lord, to John the Baptist, proved him to be God likewise. Matt. xi. 14. — God is with us in nature, reason, conscience, and the multitude of his blessings and mercies. He was with the Jews especially in Moses and the Prophets. But he is eminently with the whole world in Jesus Christ, reconciling it to himself; for he gave him his spirit without measure. John iii. 34. He sent him as the brightest manifestation of his glory, as the true image and likeness of himself for men to look upon and copy. Loving Christ, the Image, we shall love God, the Original.

24. Joseph is not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. His con-

Digitized by Google

she had brought forth her first-born son; and he called his name Jesus.

CHAPTER II.

The Visit of the Wise Men and the Flight into Egypt.

NOW when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the

---

duct shows that he was not only a just man towards others, but also submissive to the will of God.

25. *Her first-born son.* According to the Jewish custom and law, the first-born son was entitled to peculiar privileges. Whether Mary had other children afterwards is unknown, and unimportant. Between the birth and the naming and circumcision of the child, Luke records some interesting particulars. Chap. ii. 8–20. "The wisdom of God ordained, that he, who was to be the great Exemplar of human duty and of human destination, should be brought into the world and pass through it, in the lowest and most trying circumstances, erecting thereby an everlasting monument to this great and important truth: that neither riches, high station, or worldly honor are any proof of the merit of their possessors, or any mark of the divine favor."

CHAPTER II.

1. For events not mentioned by Matthew, occurring between the end of the last chapter and the beginning of this, see Luke ii. 8–38. — *Now when, &c.* i. e. about the time Jesus was born. It is supposed that Jesus was born from four to six years before the common era. According to the Jewish law, an interval of forty days must elapse before the mother could enter the temple and make the appropriate offerings. Levit. xii. 2–4. Probably the presentation of Jesus in the temple, and the benedictions of Simeon and Anna, took place before the coming of the wise men. — *Bethlehem of Judea.* So called to distinguish it from another town of the same name in Galilee. Bethlehem signifies *house of bread*, referring perhaps to the fertility of the country. It was also called Ephrata. It was a small village six miles in a southerly direction from Jerusalem, lying in the midst of fertile hills and vales, and commanding a distant view of the Dead Sea and the valley leading to it; so that any phenomenon over the place, as the brilliant spectacle witnessed by the shepherds, Luke ii. 9, would be seen far beyond the Dead Sea in the east country. This village was the birthplace and home of David, in earlier times, and from it he went forth to the army of Saul, and his royal destiny. The place is now inhabited by Christians and Mahometans, and contains about two hundred houses. The localities of the sacred history are pointed out to travellers with great exactness. A monastery stands over the place of Jesus' birth. Still little reliance can be placed on some of these traditions. — *In the days.* In the time or reign, a Hebraism. — *Herod the king.* This was Herod, miscalled the Great. The Romans were the virtual lords of the country, and he held the royal office under their authority. — *Wise men.* Sages, Magi, or Magians. Their name is of Persian origin. They were found throughout the east, but especially in Persia, and comprehended priests,

Digitized by Google

2 east to Jerusalem, saying: Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come

philosophers, and men of letters. They were much devoted to medicine, astrology, and religion, and were highly esteemed by kings as counsellors in civil and military affairs, as they professed to predict future events. Their doctrines were ascribed to Abraham as their author, or reformer; and afterwards becoming corrupted, were purified by Zoroaster, who is said to have been a descendant of the prophet Daniel. They are asserted to have worshipped God in spirit, without the use of images. As they were imbued with many Jewish notions, it was not unnatural that they should have participated to some extent in the Jewish expectation of a Messiah. Indeed Bishop Pearce believes them to have been Jews, residing in the colleges of the Magi. Rabmag, Jer. xxxix. 3, 13, means the chief of the wise men. Daniel referred to them v. 11, and at one time presided over them. — *From the east.* This is a general name of Arabia, Media, Persia, and Chaldea. It cannot now be determined from which country these visitors came, but their gifts were famous productions of Arabia, though that country lies rather south than east of Judea. — *To Jerusalem.* They naturally resort to the capital to see the supposed new-born king of the nation.

2. *King of the Jews.* As the regal office was the highest in human estimation, Jesus is often spoken of as a king, and his religion as a kingdom. A general expectation was abroad throughout the whole eastern world, that some extraordinary personage would appear at this period. Mankind anxiously awaited his coming. The Jews, relying on their prophecies, thirsted to behold their great Restorer. Josephus, their historian, says that the principal cause which stimulated them to make war against the Romans "was an ambiguous oracle, found also in our sacred writings, that about this time some one from Judea should obtain the empire of the world." Suetonius, a Roman historian, writing about the same period, mentions "that there had been for a long time all over the east a notion firmly believed, that it was in the books of the fates, that some one from Judea was destined, about that time, to obtain the empire of the world." Tacitus, another Roman author, of great credit and veracity, speaking of the Jewish calamities when their city was destroyed by Titus, says "that the mass of the people entertained a strong persuasion that it was mentioned in the ancient writings of the priests, that at that very time the east should prevail, and some one from Judea obtain the empire of the world." Other writers might be cited to the same effect. — *His star.* It was believed by the ancients that new stars appeared before great events, and at the birth or death of illustrious men, and had some mysterious connexion with their lives. Pliny says, that a new star or comet was seen on the accession of Augustus to the Roman empire, which he called his natal star. As the wise men were skilled in astrology, they readily detected uncommon appearances in the heavens. Whether the star or meteor they saw had any connexion with the bright light which accompanied the descent of the Angels to the shepherds, mentioned by Luke, ii. 9, is not stated. Probably the star was a brilliant meteor, supernaturally conducting them to the object of their search. "No man," says

Digitized by Google

to worship him. When Herod the king had heard *these things*, 3
he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and when he 4
had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people
together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

Bishop Hall, "is so qualified to see the star of Christ as a diligent proficient in philosophy." — *In the east.* While they were in the east country, they saw the star in the west, and accordingly directed their steps thither. — *To worship him.* Not in the sense of religious homage, but simply of obeisance or high respect. Marks of great reverence were shown to kings, especially in the east. Prostration of the body upon the ground before sovereigns, and the giving of the most costly presents, were common signs of homage. The wise men, regarding the young child as a candidate for the Jewish throne, and heir to some remarkable destiny, followed the usual custom. The word *worship* was formerly applied to the respect paid to man, as well as the homage given to God, see 1 Chron. xxix. 20.

3. It does not appear that Herod had as yet seen the wise men. By common report he heard of their coming and object. Afterwards, ver. 7, he sent to have an interview with them. — *He was troubled.* Was agitated. His fear was natural. He had laid the foundation of his throne in blood and crime, and killed several of his own family. His outraged conscience made him uneasy, jealous, and fearful. Wickedness converts men into cowards, "but the righteous are bold as a lion." Though far advanced in years, his insatiate ambition also led him to be anxious about the continuance of the government in his hands, and those of his successor; for the Pharisees, according to Josephus, had predicted the overthrow of Herod's reign, probably in sanguine expectation of the coming of their Messiah. If a legitimate heir to the throne was now born, he feared the kingdom would be taken out of his hands, for he was a foreigner and a usurper. — *All Jerusalem with him.* i. e. The city generally was agitated. The friends and adherents of Herod would participate in his fear and suspicion; while his enemies might justly apprehend, what afterwards took place, ver. 16, that the tyrant would find on this occasion a pretext, however groundless, for some unheard-of atrocity. Or they might rejoice at the prospect of his downfall, and exult in the hope of the speedy coming of the Messiah.

4. We may infer the extent of his consternation from the active steps he took to calm it. — *Chief priests and scribes of the people.* Probably a circumlocution for the Sanhedrim, or Jewish Senate, consisting of seventy persons. Its members were chiefly priests and Levites, including the high-priest, the ex-high-priests, and the chiefs of the twenty-four classes, into which David had divided the sacerdotal order. 1 Chron. xxiii. 6. Its jurisdiction was both civil and ecclesiastical. The scribes, elsewhere called lawyers and doctors of the law, were men of learning, versed in the laws of Moses, and the commentaries upon them. They kept the public records and registers, drew up law documents for the people, transcribed the sacred books, and acted as religious teachers and interpreters. — *He demanded, &c.* As they understood the sacred books and made it their business to expound them, he naturally

Digitized by Google

5 And they said unto him: In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it
6 is written by the prophet: "And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land
of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for
out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people
7 Israel." Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise
men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared,
8 and he sent them to Bethlehem, and said: Go and search dili-
gently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*,
bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.
9 When they had heard the king, they departed. And, lo, the
star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came
10 and stood over where the young child was. When they saw
11 the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy; and when
they were come into the house, they saw the young child with
Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him; and

---

referred to them for information respecting the birthplace of the Messiah. — *Where.* This was the important point with Herod. He wished to know the exact place, that he might find the child and put it to death. Observe, too, that the question indicates how strong the expectation of the coming of the Messiah was; though the hypocritical king thought to falsify the sure word of prophecy, and, fighting against God, to destroy the infant Jesus. — *Christ.* Rather *the* Christ, or the Messiah.

5. It was a current opinion, originated by the prophecies, that the Messiah would be born at Bethlehem. John vii. 42. — *The prophet.* Micah v. 2. The language is not verbatim, but the essential ideas are conveyed. The Evangelist might have quoted from memory.

6. Matthew only states that the passage was adduced by the priests and scribes as a proof that the Messiah would be born at Bethlehem. — *Rule.* The original is, feed and tend as a shepherd. Kings were anciently called the shepherds of their people.

7. *Privily called.* Jealousy loves to move in the dark. — *Inquired diligently.* Or, procured from them exact information. He probably wished to ascertain the precise age of the child.

8. *Worship him also. Also* should be placed before *may come*, thus, "that I also may come," &c. He veiled his purpose under the mask of hypocrisy. His conduct on this occasion was in accordance with his whole character, as drawn by Josephus and other ancient writers.

9. *Which they saw in the east.* A different arrangement would be better; — "which they, in the east, saw." It was the custom of the old painters to represent Christ with luminous rays encircling his head; derived perhaps from the circumstance of the star, standing over the place where the young child was, or the glory which surrounded him at the Baptism, or on the Mount of Transfiguration.

10. Their joy at finding their object indicates the value they attached to it.

11. *Fell down and worshipped.* Prostrated themselves and did obei-

Digitized by Google

when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being 12
warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord 13
appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying: Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child 14
and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was 15
there until the death of Herod; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying: "Out of

---

sance, as they would to any royal personage. There was no religious homage paid in the act. — *Presented.* An oriental custom, still observed. Those who would pay honor to kings, magistrates, and persons of high dignity, carry to them costly gifts. 2 Chron. ix. 1; Is. lx. 6. — *Gold and frankincense and myrrh.* 2 Chron. ix. 14. These were productions of Arabia and other oriental countries. They were timely aids to the not rich Joseph, for his succeeding journey into a foreign land. — *Frankincense.* A valuable aromatic gum, used in perfumes, sacrifices, and medicines. It exudes from incisions made in a tree during the summer. — *Myrrh.* A vegetable production of the gum or resin kind, of a bitter taste, employed in anointing, perfuming, and in embalming the dead. John xix. 39. It is noticeable that the same substance which was given as a birth-present to Jesus was also prepared for his burial.

12. *Should not return to Herod.* Else the life of Jesus would have been taken, unless some other interposition had been made. The will of God could be communicated in a dream as well as in any other way.

13. *Egypt.* During their troubles at home, the Jews had flocked in great numbers to that country, where they enjoyed toleration. Thus, by a strange vicissitude in human affairs, the land of their fathers' bondage became their asylum of liberty, and the refuge of their endangered Messiah. Several circumstances combined to recommend this country for the purpose for which Joseph fled to it. It was free from Herod's jurisdiction. Its border was near, only about sixty miles southwest from Bethlehem. Joseph and his family would find sympathy among their countrymen. By the gifts of the wise men, they had been furnished with the means of subsistence and comfort while away from home and their customary occupations. — *Herod will seek.* This prediction was afterwards fulfilled. Joseph seems not to have been aware of any hostility to the child on Herod's part, until he was divinely acquainted with it.

14. *By night.* To conceal his departure, and escape from danger as soon as possible. There is no trustworthy history or tradition of the events that befel them during their sojourn in Egypt.

15. *Death of Herod.* Probably their residence there was short, as Herod is supposed to have died in the second year after Christ's birth.

Digitized by Google

16 Egypt have I called my Son." Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth; and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the 17 wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jere- 18 my the prophet, saying: "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weep-

---

See ver. 16. — *Prophet.* Hos. xi. 1. Hosea clearly refers here to the past history of the Israelites. He utters no prediction. Matthew quotes his words by way of allusion or accommodation, not as the accomplishment of a prophecy, for there was none. He says there was a striking coincidence between God's calling the children of Israel, and his son Jesus Christ, out of Egypt.

16. *Mocked.* Was trifled with, or deceived. — *Exceeding wroth.* Angry beyond measure. Josephus describes him as a man of most ungovernable passions. — *Slew all the children, &c.* If this had been related of any other man, it would have seemed incredible, but it accorded with Herod's character. For he had put to death a brother-in-law, one of his wives, and three of his children, besides great numbers of the Jews at different times and under different pretexts. The slaughter of the Innocents harmonized therefore with the diabolical character of this man of blood. It is likely that only a small number suffered. The masculine gender of the noun in the original, and the circumstances of the case indicate that none but male infants were killed. Bethlehem was not a large village, and it has been conjectured that the number of victims was somewhere between ten and fifty. — *Coasts.* Borders, adjacent places. — *Two years old and under.* Herod thought in this way to insure the destruction of the helpless babe that had stirred up his fear and wrath. — *According to the time, &c.* Not that he had been making inquiries for two years of the Magians, or had thus long awaited their return, but such as had entered upon the second year suffered together with those under that age, which would accord with the information he had derived from the wise men, and insure, as he thought, the death of the distinguished child.

17. The grief of the mothers of Bethlehem, bereft of their infants, reminds Matthew of a parallel poetical scene in Jeremiah xxxi. 15. The description of the old prophet was *fulfilled*, or verified, or made good. In this manner the New Testament writers not unfrequently quote from the Old.

18. *Rama.* This was a city in the tribe of Benjamin, not far from Bethlehem in Judah. As Rachel was the mother of Benjamin, she is introduced as most nearly concerned in the calamities of her posterity. It is only by way of accommodation, that this passage, originally relating to what transpired in the tribe of Benjamin, when the Israelites were carried into captivity, is used to describe what took place in Judah in the days of Herod. There was great force and beauty in the introduction of this poetical figure, and it chimed exquisitely with the feelings and associations of the Jews, for whose special edification Matthew

Digitized by Google

ing *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of 19
the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying: 20
Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his 21
mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard 22
that Archelaus did reign in Judea, in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; 23

---

was writing. — *Lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning.* As if to express the abjectness of grief by adding word to word. — *Rachel weeping for her children.* The tears of the living were not enough to bewail their disasters. Jeremiah calls to his assistance those of the departed, and particularly of Rachel, whose tomb was in the route along which they were led captive to Babylon, and who is represented as rising from the dead to bewail the fate of her posterity. What Jewish heart would not be thrilled by this allusion and quotation from Jeremiah by the Evangelist! — *Because they are not.* Because they are no more, are dead. This is one among many instances of the touching simplicity characteristic of the Scriptures.

19. *Herod was dead.* The tyrant, after a reign of forty years, died of a horrible, loathsome disease. It seemed as if the pains of all he had killed were concentrated in his own person. Yet the ruling passion was strong even in death; and a few days before he expired he ordered his son Antipater to be executed, and imprisoned the chiefs of the Jewish nation, with the command, which happily was not executed, that they should all be destroyed, in order that sincere grief might be felt at his funeral. His kingdom was partitioned among his sons; Archelaus obtaining Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Antipas, Galilee and Peræa; and Philip, Trachonitis, Gaulonitis, and Batanea.

20. *They are dead.* Either the plural is here used, as is sometimes the case, for the singular number, which is the opinion of Winer, and the idea is that Herod was dead, the chief foe of Jesus; or that both Herod and his son Antipater, who was heir apparent to the throne, were dead.

21. *Young child.* The residence in Egypt did not extend probably beyond a few months. — *The land of Israel.* This comprised not only the dominions of Archelaus, but also Galilee and other provinces.

22. *Archelaus.* He succeeded to the throne by his father's will, and received the confirmation of his power from the Roman emperor, Augustus. He proved such a tyrant, that, being accused by the Jews to the emperor, he was banished, after a reign of seven years, to Vienna in Gaul, where he died. — *He turned aside:* to Galilee; which was under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas.

23. *Nazareth.* A small town in lower Galilee, situated in a hilly region: down one of the precipices

Digitized by Google

that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets: He shall be called a Nazarene.

CHAPTER III.

Ministry of John the Baptist.

IN those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilder-

of which its inhabitants endeavored to throw their townsman, Jesus Christ. Luke iv. 29. It is now a large village of three thousand inhabitants, and contains a convent and two churches. — *The prophets.* There is no place in the prophets still extant, where this precise saying occurs. The prophets, however, represented the coming One as a suffering and despised, as well as a triumphant Messiah. Is. liii. To be a Nazarene was to bear an unhonored name. The guileless Nathanael could ask, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" The reputation of the place was bad. The idea then is, that, according to the tenor of those predictions usually supposed to refer to Christ, he became an inhabitant of a proverbially mean place, dwelt in humble life, and was *despised* and *rejected* by men.

"It was undoubtedly a part of the plan of Providence to draw the Saviour from humble human circumstances, in order to render his divine authority the more conspicuous and unquestionable. It was thus made to appear that his words of wisdom could not have been learned from man, and that he must have been from God. He probably received little or no education during his early years; for the Jews asked, 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?' Schools and instruction were not then universal as they are now, and Joseph was probably too poor to afford to his children a privilege which could be purchased only by the rich."

CHAP. III.

1 – 12. For the parallel passages in the other Gospels see Mark i. 1 – 8; Luke iii. 1 – 18.

1. After the lapse of twenty-five or thirty years from the events recorded in the last chapter, the curtain is again drawn aside, and we behold a new scene. Jesus grown to manhood, and John, a new character, whose parentage and remarkable birth are related by Luke, now appear upon the stage of action; the Messiah and his Forerunner. — *In those days.* A common introduction to Scriptural narration, used with considerable latitude of meaning. "At this period," or "about this time," not immediately after the events of the last chapter, but while Jesus lived at Nazareth. — *John the Baptist.* Or, the Baptizer. So called, because it was peculiarly his office to baptize; and in order to distinguish him from the Evangelist and Apostle of the same name. John's mission was to prepare men for the ministry of Jesus, to call public attention to him as the Christ, and to furnish evidence of the justice of his claims by the fulfilment of prophecy. For an account of the origin of John, see Luke, chap. i. Matthew was writing to those who were already acquainted with the events of the age. Hence he leaves much to be explained by a reference to other sources. — *Preaching.* Or, proclaiming, or crying or announcing as a herald, for so the word implies in the original. It suggests the idea that he delivered his message with great publicity, earnest-

Digitized by Google

ness of Judea, and saying: Repent ye, for the kingdom of 2
heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the 3
prophet Esaias, saying: "The voice of one crying in the

ness, and authority. The substance of the proclamation is recorded in the following verses. — *The wilderness of Judea.* A tract lying on the river Jordan and the Dead Sea, east of Jerusalem. The words "wilderness" and "desert" are not to be taken in the Bible as always meaning regions totally without cultivation or inhabitants, but those thinly peopled, and comparatively barren; generally devoted to grazing. In Josh. xv. 61, 62, a wilderness is represented as having "six cities with their villages." Judea was the southern portion of Palestine.

2. The following words are to be understood as containing the burden of his preaching, the general outline of his addresses, which were adapted to different times, places, and persons. Luke iii. 11–18. — *Repent ye.* Rather, Reform yourselves. The exhortation involved in itself more than mere sorrow for sin. It implied not only regret for the past, but amendment for the future: not only that the wound was to be probed, but healed. The reason why John seized upon this theme was, that the Jews had unfitted themselves by their worldliness and vices for the reception of the great coming Teacher. The professed believers in religion needed first to be renewed in holiness. Judgment must begin at the house of God. The Jewish people had suffered the fire of heaven to go out upon the altars of their hearts, and were cold, skeptical, and corrupt. Hence the key note of the Baptist's desert cry, the first blast of his trumpet echoing over the moral wilderness of Judea, was, REFORMATION. Jesus prolonged the note which John had struck. It has continued to resound to this day, and must for ever, in a sinful world. It is the great theme for men and nations. — *For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Or, better, the reign of God draws near. This is the persuasive for immediate repentance and reformation, that the Messiah was now coming. The kingdom of heaven, of God, of Christ, phrases suggested, perhaps, by Dan. ii. 44, vii. 13, 14, all refer to the same thing, the reign of the Messiah, or, in more modern phraseology, the Christian Religion, which came to rule over the hearts and lives of men, and bring them to an obedience to the moral Governor of the world, and thus establish a moral kingdom. For this spiritual reign Reformation was requisite; a far different preparation from that which the Jews contemplated; whose hearts, at the approach of the long expected Deliverer, savored more of ambition, revenge, and avarice, than of sentiments of good-will to man or piety to God, expecting, as they did, a temporal King, and not the Prince of Peace. So now the Gospel demands penitent hearts, and reformed lives, for its subjects. As an old writer says, "Thus must the way be made for Christ into every heart. Never will he enter that soul where the herald of repentance hath not been before him."

3. *Prophet Esaias*, i. e. Isaiah xl. 3. The Evangelist quotes from the Septuagint version of the Old Testament; hence there is a slight variation from our translation, which was made from the Hebrew. Isaiah undoubtedly spoke with reference to the return from the Babylonish captivity. Matthew applies the passage to the Forerunner of the Messiah. — *The voice, &c.* The office

Digitized by Google

wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths
straight." And the same John had his raiment of camel's
hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was

of John was to act as a voice for the coming Word, a herald of the great Teacher. The succeeding imagery is drawn from oriental customs, a knowledge of which is often required to understand the Scriptures. When monarchs journeyed, or marched on military expeditions, they despatched pioneers forward to level eminences, fill up valleys, and make a straight road. The Jews were called upon to prepare for the Messiah's advent, clearing their hearts of those prejudices and sins, which would impede his progress and success as a moral conquerer. As the greatest blessings were expected under the Redeemer's reign, John bids the Jews make ready for his coming by repenting of and forsaking those sins, which would prove the worst stumbling-blocks in his way, the most serious impediments to the cordial reception of a pure religion. — *The Lord*, i. e. Jehovah. No argument in support of Jesus being identical with Jehovah can be drawn from this passage. For the original application of the prophet's words was only to an exhibition of God's power in the restoration of the Jews, not to an actual personal appearance of the Deity. So in like manner, according to the Evangelist's application, Jehovah came to his chosen people in Jesus Christ, not personally and literally, but in the spirit and gifts which he bestowed upon his beloved Son.

4. *Raiment of camel's hair, &c.* This description is thrown in, perhaps, to show the similarity between John and Elijah, or to remind the Jews that the herald of Christ did not come in that rich dress and equipage, which they would suppose appropriate to one who came to announce so splendid a king; but, on the contrary, dressed in the garments, and subsisting on the food, of the poorest class of his countrymen. He was not "a man clothed in soft raiment," but apparelled like one of the old prophets. 2 Kings i. 8; Zech. xiii. 4. — *Raiment* is an ancient word for clothing. Camels are not only very valuable for carrying burdens over the vast deserts of the east, but their milk and flesh are eaten, and garments are made of the hair, which, though coarse and shaggy, is manufactured into a rough, cheap cloth, for the common people. The hair is shed annually. — *A leathern girdle.* This was a very important part of the oriental dress, as it confined the flowing cloak or robe, which would otherwise be inconvenient, if suffered to hang loosely about the body. The girdle was also used as a purse. The modern dervises, or Turkish priests, are clothed like the ancient prophets. — *His meat, &c.* Meat, in old English, stands for food in general, whether animal or vegetable. Locusts were allowed as an article of food by the law of Moses. Lev. xi. 22. They have been in use for this purpose, both in ancient and modern times, in the east. "We saw," says Niebuhr, in his Travels, "an Arab who had gathered a sack full in order to dry them, and keep them for his winter provisions." — *Wild honey.* The honey which was found in the cavities of trees and the clefts of rocks may have been so denominated. Ps. lxxxi. 16. Palestine was described as "a land flowing with milk and honey." Or it may have been not the honey made by the bee, but honey-dew, a

Digitized by Google

locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, 5
and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan; and 6
were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But 7

sweet substance exuding from the leaves of palm, date, and olive trees. 1 Sam. xiv. 25, 26. Oriental travellers speak of the abundance of honey in Arabia and Palestine. The dress and diet of the Baptist indicated no uncommon rigor and severity, but rather simplicity and poverty. His mode of life affords no countenance or approbation to the recluse and hermit.

5. The Jews, galled by the Roman yoke, looked with impatience for the Messiah, from whom they expected deliverance and universal rule over the rest of the world. Curiosity, impatience, and ambition, together with the striking air and bold address of John, probably drew thousands to the Jordan. — *Jerusalem.* The inhabitants of the city. This was the Jewish metropolis, situated about forty miles east of the Mediterranean, in a region of high hills. The wonderful events of which it has been the scene, both in ancient and modern times, render it the most remarkable city on the globe. — *All Judea.* Not literally every one, but vast crowds; the country went as one man. It is an important rule in the interpretation of Scripture, as well as other writings, that universal propositions should be qualified and limited by the circumstances in which they occur. The Bible is written in the free, figurative, diversified language of common life, and by no means in a literal, technical, philosophical dialect. Judea lay between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. — *All the region round about Jordan.* Should be, the country along the Jordan on both sides of the river. This stream rises in the Antilibanus mountains, and flowing southerly through Lake Merom and the Sea of Galilee, after a course of one hundred and twenty or thirty miles, empties into the Dead Sea. It forms the eastern boundary of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. Its average width is from sixty to eighty feet, and its depth about ten or twelve, though it varies according to the season of the year. John had two stations, at least, on the Jordan; Bethabara, or Bethany, and Enon, and perhaps more.

6. *Baptized of him*, i. e. by him. Baptism was well known among the Jews before John's day, as is evident from Matthew's familiar way of introducing the mention of it. It was employed to initiate heathen proselytes into the Jewish religion, according to the testimony of the Jewish books called Talmuds, which consisted of the writings and traditions of the Rabbins. How administered is nowhere said; whether by immersion or sprinkling is of little consequence, so it was done with water and the heart was right. It was a new thing, however, to baptize Jews. John by that means intimated to them, that, though they were the covenant people of God, they had so far become like heathen, that, before they could be prepared for the Messiah's kingdom, they must pass through the same ceremony as proselytes. — *In Jordan.* In *the* Jordan. The definite article should be uniformly placed before this word. — *Confessing their sins.* One that truly repents of his sins will be ready to confess them to God, and, so far as is proper, to men. John required of his converts a confession of their sins, either in general or particular, as an indication of true contrition and a fitness to be baptized. Jam. v. 16; 1 John i. 9.

Digitized by Google

when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them : O generation of vipers, who hath

7. *The Pharisees and Sadducees.* These were the two leading philosophical and religious sects among the Jews. The Essenes were a third one, resembling monks in their mode of life, but no mention is made of them in the New Testament. From Josephus and the Talmuds, as well as from scattered notices in the New Testament, we gather information respecting the other two.

The Pharisees. The Separatists. They were so called from a Hebrew word, meaning to separate, or to set apart, because they professed to set themselves apart from the rest of the people, and live purer lives. They plumed themselves upon their scrupulous adherence to all religious ceremonies and observances, washings, fastings, tithes, and long, ostentatious devotions, but in their lives were notorious for their ambition, corruption, hypocrisy, and haughtiness. Such was the prevailing character of the sect, though there were doubtless among them, as in every body of men, some true and noble spirits. Acts v. 34. They received all the Old Testament as of divine authority, and adhered closely to the letter of the Mosaic law. But in addition to these writings, they had the traditions of the elders or early teachers of the nation, to which they gave equal credence as to the Pentateuch itself. Some of their doctrines were : the government of the world by Fate, or a fixed decree of God ; the existence of spirits and angels ; the resurrection from the dead ; the immortality of the soul ; and the future state of rewards and punishments.

The *Sadducees* derived their name from Sadoc, the founder of their sect. They were less numerous and had less influence among the people than the Pharisees, but were more wealthy. They rejected the traditions, and, as is supposed, received only the law of Moses, or the Pentateuch, as of divine authority. They believed not in the existence of spirits, in immortality, or a future retribution. In fact, they were the skeptics of their day and nation. They however joined in the worship of the temple, and assisted at all religious assemblies. Several of them held the office of high priest. Caiaphas, who condemned our Saviour, was a Sadducee. No account is given in the Gospels of a single conversion to Christianity from this sect.

Both Pharisees and Sadducees, in common with the rest of the nation, expected a Messiah. They came to the baptism of John, incited by this expectation ; and supposing John to be either the Messiah or his Forerunner, they were desirous of early securing his favor, and gaining posts of profit and honor in his kingdom. John saw through their motives, and uttered a powerful, though deserved, rebuke. — *O generation of vipers.* Offspring of vipers, or broods of vipers. This phrase is descriptive of the two aforementioned classes. He did not spare the rich and lordly, but launched at them his burning remonstrances in the bold tone of one of the ancient prophets. Vipers are a kind of snakes, whose bite is immediately fatal. This reptile has been used from the remotest antiquity as an emblem of what is destructive. Applied to the Pharisees and Sadducees, it signifies that they were subtile, malignant, deadly. The poison of vipers rankled in their hearts, under the fair seeming and smooth disguise of religious professions. — *Who hath*

Digitized by Google

warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth 8
therefore fruits meet for repentance, and think not to say with- 9
in yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father; for I say un-
to you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children

warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Rather a strong exclamation of surprise than an interrogation. John expresses wonder, that men so hardened and hypocritical should be induced to come to a baptism of repentance. "The wrath to come" was the impending destruction soon to fall on the Jewish nation, unless they repented and reformed, and which did descend forty years after, overthrowing the Temple, destroying millions of men, and annihilating the national existence of the Jews. Those who embraced Christianity escaped these judgments of heaven, because they believed in the prophecies foretelling their approach, and fled from the country. The same sins, also, which brought down these temporal calamities upon the heads of men, would meet with a becoming punishment in the future world.

8. *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.* Or, consistent with amendment of life. Fruits stand for good works, righteous, holy deeds. Here is an allusion to their noted hypocrisy. Show by your lives that your repentance is sincere. Manifest a character and conduct appropriate, belonging to, genuine penitence. Show forth, if you really repent, not merely the leaves and flowers of profession, but the *fruits* of performance. Matt. vii. 20. The proof of goodness is in the life. Let not repentance be a dead form with us, but a living act. Let it produce corresponding works.

9. They deemed their salvation insured because they were the descendants of so righteous and faithful a man as Abraham. John viii. 33, 39, 53. John understands their state of mind, and therefore addresses himself, as every teacher ought, to that which, unless corrected, would nullify all his instructions and warnings. Thus he taught with adaptedness. The same characteristic, in a greater degree, appears in the teachings of the Saviour. It has been a weak point in all nations, to put their salvation in their ancestors, not in their posterity; to look back to the good old days, not to look forward to better ones; to locate the Golden Age in the Past, not in an improved Future. The couplet of the poet has been forgotten: —

"They, that on glorious ancestors enlarge,
Produce their debt instead of their discharge."

— *God is able, &c.* Think not of saying to yourselves, We are Abraham's children, and are therefore fully assured of the favor of God, and the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom. With God all things are possible. He is not dependent on the Jews, or any other nation, for the success of his purposes; he can find other servants and instruments. Yea, out of the very stones of the Jordan he can through his omnipotence raise up worthy children of Abraham; an allusion, perhaps, to God's power in giving a child to Abraham. Gal. iii. 29. Perhaps in the expression "these stones," there is also an allusion to the Gentiles, towards whom the Jews entertained the greatest contempt. Some deem it a proverbial phrase. It is to be feared, that, as some of old trusted in the merits of Abraham, so now many rely upon Christ, a much greater than Abraham, as a substitute for their

Digitized by Google

10 unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of
the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good
11 fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize
you with water, unto repentance; but he that cometh after
me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear;

---

own goodness, instead of forming him within them, reproducing his spirit in their hearts. But it will not do. *Personal* piety is the inextinguishable need of every child of God.

10. *The axe is laid unto the root of the trees, &c.* i. e. the axe is lying, ready to be used, at the very root of the trees. The approaching calamities are no trivial evils, but rather like cutting up the tree by the roots. This was a Jewish proverb. A searching, powerful influence is going abroad. A new standard is to be erected, by which the hearts of men, and the institutions of society, are to be tried. Principles and conduct are to be tested. Nothing will stand the trial but genuine repentance, true goodness. The excuses and subterfuges and lies of men will be swept away. Antiquated ceremonies and systems will be superseded. The realities of the spiritual life will stand forth in their just prominence, when the rubbish and the corruptions and the commandments of men have been consumed. — *Is hewn down.* Will be, is to be, hewn or cut down. The present tense, according to Winer, is not unfrequently used in the sense of the future. See Luke iii. 10, 14.

11. *Unto repentance.* As a sign of repentance and reformation. Baptism was a sign that the obligation to repent was felt and acknowledged, and that the penitential sentiments would be cherished. — *He that cometh after me.* A circumlocution for Jesus, the Messiah, the head of the kingdom of heaven, that is at hand. — *Mightier than I.* Of higher dignity and authority. — *Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.* Not the article we call shoes, but the sandals of the east; which were soles for the bottoms of the feet, bound about the feet and ankles with leathern thongs or straps. These sandals were put off when a person entered a house, and put on when he left it. As stockings were then unknown, the feet soon became soiled, being only protected on the bottom, and not at the sides, and hence they had to be frequently washed. To put on and off the sandals, upon these various occasions, was the office of the lowest servants. The strong expression of John is, therefore, that he was unworthy to perform the most menial service for the glorious Being who was soon to appear in the character and with the credentials of the long desired Redeemer. — What a touching humility in one, who was himself the subject of prophecy, at whose birth miracles had been wrought, whose heart was fired with a spirit more than mortal, and whose privilege it was, after the long lapse of four hundred years, to renew the old prophetic office, and introduce the mighty Deliverer of the world to his ministry! What a beautiful resignation, too, adorned his character! He grasped at no honors; living till the orb of the sun of righteousness was above the horizon, he yet did not witness the perfect day. He could say, "This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled; He must increase, but I must decrease." Great as he

Digitized by Google

he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire. Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his 12 floor; and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

was, he had that humbleness of mind, that is indeed the noblest of all traits. He was ready at once to resign his own honors before the Son of God. Imprisoned for an honest rebuke of wickedness, his single anxiety seemed to be, to ascertain whether the Messiah had actually come. Matt. xi. 2, 3. He died a martyr to his own integrity, and the victim of the evil passions which he sought in vain to bring under the control of conscience and the laws of God. Is it strange that his memory has been canonized in the Christian church! — *He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.* Or, with a holy spirit, or breath, and with fire. "It is impossible to convey," says Furness, "the full force of this word *spirit* in a translation. The original word is much more comprehensive than the word 'spirit.' It signifies also 'air,' 'wind,' and the meaning of the Baptist is, Water is the symbol of my office, but the power of him who is coming after me may be signified by far subtler and more searching elements, 'wind and fire.' This appears from the connexion. He instantly likens his successor to a husbandman, prepared with his fan to blow the chaff out of the wheat, and with fire to consume it." Such was the ministry of Jesus, a powerful, searching, purifying influence. Such were the energies of the Spirit of God by which he was empowered and strengthened to perform his mission.

12. *Whose fan is in his hand.* Not *fan*, according to the original word, but *winnowing shovel*, with which the grain when threshed was tossed up in the wind, and the chaff and kernels thus separated. Is. xxx. 24. The fan or van was more complex. It was designed, by means of sails, to raise an artificial wind, and was not an implement which could be carried in the hand. — *Thoroughly purge his floor, &c.* Here reference is made to the mode of threshing grain in the east. The floor was not made as ours are with planks and boards, but consisted of an elevated circular area, formed in the field by smoothing and hardening the soil with a cylinder. A high location was more free from wet, and more accessible to the wind. There was frequently no covering, nor walls. Different methods were employed to get out the grain. It was beaten with flails, trodden by oxen, or bruised by a heavy kind of sledge, drawn by cattle. Is. xli. 15. The next operation was winnowing. This was to *purge* or clear up the threshing *floor*. The grain and straw were then separated, and the grain thrown up into the wind with a shovel, and the chaff thus blown out from it. The wheat was deposited in the garner, or granary. There was danger, that, after they had been separated, the chaff and broken straw would by a change of the wind be driven back again amongst the grain. To prevent it, fire was put to what is called chaff, but which also included the broken pieces of straw, and commencing on the windward side, it crept on and consumed all, before it went out. This made it an *unquenchable fire;* it burnt until it had done its office. Jesus came among the Jews and their institutions like the

Digitized by Google

13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be
14 baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying: I have need
15 to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him: Suffer *it to be so* now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

husbandman among his grain. By the searching power and purity of his religion, the good and bad would be divided. The former would be preserved in all calamities. The latter would be visited by the most terrible judgments, represented in figurative language by inextinguishable fire. Mal. iv. 1. A less probable explanation of the verse is, that the antiquated institutions and burdensome ceremonies of the Jews would be consumed like chaff in the fire, but the sound parts and wholesome laws would be preserved like wheat put into the granary. — The Saviour described a part of his office, when he said, "For judgment I am come into this world."

13 – 17. Parallel passages, Mark i. 9 – 11; Luke iii, 21, 22; John i. 29 – 34.

13. *Galilee.* Nazareth, where Jesus had been living with his parents, Luke ii. 51, was a village of that province. Mark i. 9. John was at this time at Bethabara, a place on the eastern bank of the river, not far from its mouth. John i. 28. He afterwards baptized at Enon, on the western bank. John iii. 23.

14. *John forbade him.* The reason is given; because he felt himself to be inferior to Jesus. That is, morally, not officially, inferior. John was already acquainted with the pure and exalted character of Jesus, and felt the deepest veneration for him as a private individual, for their parents were relatives. Luke i. 36. But he did not yet know that he was the Messiah to come. John i. 31. He knew him not in an official character as Christ, but he knew him simply as Jesus. His ground of unwillingness to baptize him was, accordingly, that he was conscious of possessing less goodness and greatness than his kinsman. He says, therefore, that the baptism should be the other way, and that he himself ought to be the subject and not the administrator of the rite, in the present case, to one too pure to need reformation.

15. *To fulfil all righteousness.* Or, every righteous ordinance. As has been said, Jesus was baptized, not that the water might sanctify him, but that he might sanctify the water. That is, he did not need it as a sign of repentance and purification, but conformed to it, because it was an ordinance of God, and was to be a ceremony of his religion through all time. He claimed no immunity on account of superior holiness. In these cases the master is as the disciple, and the disciple as the master. His words to John have been thus paraphrased: "If my character be excellent as you have represented it, it is peculiarly becoming and natural in me to fulfil every duty, and do whatever is right and proper to be done, on all occasions. As the ordinance which you administer is of divine appointment, I wish to show my respect for every institution of God, by submitting to it; as you announce the approach of the Messiah's kingdom, I wish to bear a public testimony of my faith in your prophetic character, and to declare

Digitized by Google

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of 16 the water; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.

my expectation of that glorious event." These reasons satisfied John, and he acquiesced. — We are led here to contrast the readiness of our divine Master to fulfil all righteousness, with the backwardness of many persons to comply with the positively and divinely instituted ordinances of Christianity, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. His example teaches them to comply with all the commands of God, whether moral or ritual. Of the comparative importance of the two, moral and ritual, we may sum up all in his words: "These (the moral) ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other (the ritual) undone."

16. *Straightway out of the water.* He went up *from* the water. The original does not express the idea that they had been *into* the water, as would have been the case if the mode of baptism was by immersion, but they went down *to* the water, and then, when the rite had been performed, went up *from* the river's brink. — *The heavens*, i. e. the visible sky. — *Were opened.* Some critics would transpose the word *straightway* from the foregoing clause, and insert it here. When it lightens, the clouds appear to open. The sky seems to be cleft asunder by the flash, for an instant, and then close up again. Such might have been the case now. The bright and sudden light might appear to make the firmament open. Acts vii. 56. This appearance is represented as taking place while he was praying. Luke iii. 21. The first act of his new office is, to acknowledge his dependence on God, and to supplicate his divine aid in the mighty enterprise before him. — *Unto him.* The supernatural appearance probably occurred in the sight of both Jesus and John, and also of the people. — *Him* here refers to Jesus. — *He saw*, i. e. Jesus saw. John also says he saw it. John i. 32, 33. It was a testimony vouchsafed to John that Jesus was the Messiah. John i. 34. — *The Spirit of God.* Here we are plainly told what the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Ghost, is. It is not a person. It is not a numerical distinction of the Godhead. It is not a third part, or quality, or substance, or person, of the All-Glorious Deity. The human mind has originated these erroneous and mystifying notions; not the Bible. The Holy Spirit, or Ghost, is THE SPIRIT OF GOD. And as God is a Spirit, it is often, but not always, used for God himself. Here we may rest. We cannot understand the essence of the Deity. We can only say, that the Scriptures represent the Spirit of God as no more a distinct being from God, than the spirit of man is a distinct being from man. God is One, not Three. 1 Cor. ii. 11. — *Descending like a dove.* Luke says, "in a bodily shape." This may signify, either that there was a distinct, substantial appearance like a dove in form, or that the miraculous symbol of the divine spirit descended with a gentle, hovering, and dove-like motion. The innocence, gentleness, and meekness of Christ were fitly indicated by this reference to the dove. Matt. x. 16. This pure and gentle emblem was a fitting investiture of an office of love and good-will, of humility and holiness. — *Lighting upon him.* This would serve to connect, in the view of all the spectators, the

Digitized by Google

17 on him. And, lo, a voice from heaven, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

CHAPTER IV.

The Temptation of Jesus Christ.

THEN was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to

beautiful testimony of heaven with the person of Jesus. Unless it had lighted upon some particular person, it would have remained doubtful who was specially designated in the wonderful appearance. This circumstance singled out the individual. So on the day of Pentecost, when the holy spirit of God descended on the Apostles, cloven tongues of fire *sat on each of them*, pointing out the individuals who were divinely inspired and authorized. — *A voice from heaven.* Ear as well as eye was addressed. Probably, the surrounding multitudes heard the declaration, descending directly from God, and confirming the Messiahship of Jesus. At subsequent periods, the same august voice broke the silence of the skies: on the mount of Transfiguration, Matt. xvii. 5; in the city of Jerusalem, John xii. 28; bearing attestation to the same great truth. — *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*, i. e. *with* whom I am well pleased. The title of child or son was used frequently among the Jews, not in the sense of precise natural relationship, but in the more extended signification of unity of affection and purpose. This mode of speech was used of men of different characters. Thus, the wicked were called the sons or children of Belial, Satan, and the Devil. John viii. 44; the good, the children of God. Matt. v. 9. In accordance with this form of speech, Jesus Christ was denominated the Son of God; and to show the unparalleled excellence of his character, and his entire conformity to the divine will in the office he bore, he was called the well beloved, the only begotten, John i. 18, the dear, Son of God. This term of endearment implies that Jesus had the full and constant approbation of God, that he was one with him, meaning to express not oneness of nature or personality, but oneness of purpose and love, that he was peculiarly, more than any other being that ever existed, the Son of God, inasmuch as he attained to perfect love and holiness, and made the purposes of his Father his own. God gave not the spirit by measure unto him. Thus he ever pleased God. Thus his disciples, inhaling his filial spirit, may, in some humble measure, please both him and his Father.

CHAP. IV.

1–11. Parallel passages, Mark i. 12, 13. Luke iv. 1–13. Mark's account is general; Luke is more particular, and corresponds with Matthew, except in the order of the temptations. This account of our Lord's temptation has been variously interpreted. Some suppose it to be a *parable*, designed for the instruction of his disciples. Some regard it as the description of a *vision* or *dream*. Some understand the tempter to have been a wicked man, or a Jewish priest. Most conceive him to have been literally the Devil, or Satan, as the popular terms are. But these views are all more or less burdened with fatal inconsistencies and difficulties. We

Digitized by Google

be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days 2

are rather to construe this passage as a figurative narration of a real transaction, a series of real temptations in the mind of Jesus. The incidents were actual occurrences; but, in relating them to his disciples, Jesus employed the popular oriental imagery. Force and spirit is given to the circumstances, by throwing them into the form of a dialogue. The thoughts and feelings of the mind are introduced as interlocutors, speaking and quoting from the Bible. Jesus prefigured to himself the misemployment that might be made of his special gifts, but resisted the allurements to make such an abuse of them. He was faithful to his high trust. He told the spiritual experience to his followers, in order to instruct them in the use of their miraculous powers, in a manner fitted to impress the memory, and left it as a legacy of warning and encouragement to the world.

1. *Then.* After the baptism of Jesus, and the descent of the holy spirit. "The water of baptism is succeeded by the fire of temptation." — *Led up of the spirit into the wilderness.* Mark uses the strong language, "And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness." Under the powerful influence of the divine spirit, which had just been poured upon him "without measure," he leaves the crowd, and withdraws to a wild region, away from the haunts of men, to the most sequestered parts of the desert or thinly peopled country, which were frequented by wild beasts. Mark i. 13. It was probably the desert of Jericho, lying not far from Bethabara, where he was baptized. The soul of Jesus was full of the great consecration of himself to the work of God, and the solemn duties pertaining to it. His mind dilated and kindled with the grandeur of his mission. He retired to meditate on its toils and trials, its responsibilities and joys. He was now to leave the humble shop of the carpenter, to assume the highest office ever known in the world. What wonder that he repaired to the deepest solitudes, to engage in the exercises of fasting, prayer, and self-communion? What wonder that there, too, he should be subject to the assault of temptations? — *To be tempted of the devil*, i. e. by the devil. In the Bible, "certain and inevitable consequences are very often represented as the results specially intended." Jesus went not into the desert in order to be tempted. It would have been a practical violation of his prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." His object was to fast, to pray, and to meditate. Or, rather, perhaps he had no specified plan. He wandered almost unconsciously, while under the workings of his high contemplations, and the mighty promptings of God's spirit, farther and farther from men, into the deep fastnesses of the desert, mountainous country. There came the temptation, which was the effect, not the cause of his withdrawal. The words *Satan* and *devil* mean *adversary* and *accuser*. Human beings are called by these names. Matt. xvi. 23; John vi. 70; Tit. ii. 3. In the last case, the words *false accusers* are translated elsewhere *devils*. Where no person is alluded to by these terms, they are used as a personification of temptation, evil. James iv. 7. This rhetorical figure is frequent in the Old and New Testament. Solomon personifies Wisdom; Paul, Charity.

2. *Fasted.* We are not to understand by this that he absolutely went without food during this long

Digitized by Google

3 and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said: If thou be the Son of God,

period; but that he had no regular supply. He lived sparingly. He had no sustenance except the scanty products of the desert, consisting, perhaps, of wild berries, fruits, and roots. Luke, iv. 2, says, indeed, that "he did eat nothing," but that is a general expression, which is probably to be taken with some limitation. So Jesus says, Matt. xi. 18, that "John came neither eating nor drinking," when we are told that "his meat was locusts and wild honey." Matt. iii. 4. — *Forty days.* Moses, the Founder, and Elijah, the Restorer of the Jewish system, fasted the same length of time. Exod. xxxiv. 28; Deut. ix. 9, 18; 1 Kings xix. 8. This is probably merely an undesigned coincidence.—*An hungered*, i. e. hungry. The meagre food of the desert was not sufficient. His body was worn down by fasting. If, as some suppose, he had been during all this time miraculously supported, and had literally tasted nothing, we may rationally ask, Why should that aid be suddenly withdrawn? It would throw him into that conflict with temptation, into which we are told God directly leads no man. James i. 13. Miracles are not to be unnecessarily supposed. The facts in this account do not demand a miraculous interposition, but are more naturally explained without it.

3. *When the tempter came to him.* What tempter? A being in bodily shape, of horrid aspect, or a designing man, or a wily Jewish priest? This is inconceivable; for their personal appearance, and known design, would have completely broken the spell of the temptation. What came was the tempting thought, the evil suggestion, that rose up in the mind, in his state of hunger and weariness. We are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that Jesus was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." And that "being tempted he is able to succor them that are tempted." And that "he learned obedience by the things he suffered." How then are we tempted? For when that question is answered, we can understand how Jesus was tempted. We are tempted by the concurrence of some external object with our inward desire, or by some spontaneous imagining, leading us, if followed, or even indulged, into sin. The wrong consists not in the thought, or imagination, but in its being cherished, kept before the mind's eye, and acted out. Milton says truly, —

"Evil into the mind of God or man
May come and go, so *unapproved*, and leave
No spot or blame behind."

Jesus was thus tempted, or tried, or put to a moral proof. If it was in any different way, then he is no example for us in temptation; we can derive no strength, courage, or hope, from his signal victory. But if he "was tempted in all points like as we are," then "he is able to succor them that are tempted." He, as well as we, had at times to resist intruding thoughts of evil, whispers, and imaginings of wrong. But he resisted at once and entirely, and "no spot or blame" was left behind, any more than by the shadow of a cloud flying over the landscape. He was without sin. — *He said: If thou be the Son of God.* This was the specious, plausible air, the temptation wore. "If," as he thought with himself, "I am indeed the beloved Son of God, as I have been just declared to be by a voice from heaven, then why endure this weariness and painful hunger? Why

Digitized by Google

command that these stones be made bread. But he answered 4
and said: It is written: "Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

may not my wonderful power be exerted for so important an end as my own comfort and self-preservation?" To his pure nature bad thoughts were foreign; but this tempting idea came in a robe of light. — *Command that these stones be made bread.* Or, more correctly, that these stones be made loaves. "Here is an opportunity to try my power, and determine whether I am really the Son of God. The stones I see lying around me in the desert can, by a word, be turned into loaves of bread, to relieve my pressing hunger." Thus Jesus was tempted by the nature of the circumstances in which he was placed, as we are every day of our lives. He was tempted to use his power of working miracles in order to change stones into loaves, and thus silence the sharp cravings of hunger. The first temptation was that of appetite. — Blessed be Heaven, we have not in our Saviour a "high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. iv. 15.

4. *He answered.* His good principles, his holy spirit, shrank from the idea with abhorrence. The words of Scripture rose to his lips: *It is written,* in Deut. viii. 3, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* Man's life, including reason, will, affection, and hope, is sustained by all the diversified manifestations of God, by whatever he appoints. For *word, thing* might be properly substituted. These words refer to the case of the Israelites, who were supported, not by bread, or any ordinary food, but by manna miraculously sent. As applied by Jesus to himself, their sense is this: "Animal Life may be sustained by any means God shall think proper. I will not therefore distrust him so far as to undertake to supply my own wants by the use of those gifts allotted me by Him for the most important moral end." The tempting thought fled. — The quotation may have also a spiritual import; Wisd. of Solomon xvi. 26; as is beautifully set forth in a late author, Furness. "'If so,' we may suppose the blessed Saviour to have communed with himself — 'if I am the Son of God, then a mere animal life is not the end of my being, to which I am to devote my powers. The divine faculties and gifts of the Son of God are destined not for private and finite uses, but for vast and comprehensive purposes correspondent to gifts so great and rare. They have not been bestowed on me merely to support this perishing clay, and to exercise them for an object comparatively so worthless would be sacrilege. The life of the Son of God is not in the life of the body, but in the life of the godlike soul, and that is sustained by the consciousness of being true to the Divine Will, the word written on the heart. No, I will not desecrate my power by putting it to a mean use. Better were it for me to perish than to forget my true destiny. My dependence is not on bread alone, or principally, but on the consciousness of being true to God.'" — "How often do we see men, who possess powers fitting them to be the reformers and benefactors of thousands, sacrificing every thing for bread, or for the wealth and place which will secure bread enough and to spare!"

Digitized by Google

5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth
6 him on a pinnacle of the temple; and saith unto him: If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written: "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy
7 foot against a stone." Jesus said unto him: It is written

Jesus could change water into wine for others, to promote the innocent hilarity of a wedding, but he would not change stones into bread for himself, though it were to quell hunger, and relieve faintness. He performed no miracle specially for himself. He did not resist in the Garden, though a cloud of angels were ready to come at his bidding. He did not descend from the Cross of shame and agony, though his enemies scornfully challenged him to do it. Glorious being! His heart beat with a Love superior to every selfish consideration.

5. *Then the devil taketh him.* There was no transportation except in his own thoughts. His tempting imagination flew with him to Jerusalem, and seated him on the top of the temple. It is thus our thoughts and imaginations tempt us, carrying us hither and thither, to and fro, on the earth, to the cities of pleasure and the mountains of power and pride. — *Holy city.* Jerusalem was so called because the temple of God was situated there. The inscription on coins was "Jerusalem the Holy." — *Pinnacle of the temple.* A wing, turret, or battlement of that edifice. The top of the porch is perhaps here meant, called the King's Portico, which towered perpendicularly 750 feet above the bottom of a deep valley at its side. Josephus refers to it. "This cloister deserves to be mentioned better than any other under the sun; for while the valley was very deep, this farther vastly higher elevation of the cloister stood upon that height, insomuch that, if any one looked down from the top of the battlement, he would be giddy."

6. *If thou be the Son of God.* This idea perpetually occurred to the mind of Jesus. In it was lodged much of the force of the temptation. — *Cast thyself down.* Thus employing his miraculous powers to strike the multitudes of Jerusalem with awe and wonder. Such a "sign" would substantiate in their eyes his claim to the Messiahship. They were expecting some such striking display of power, rather than the beneficent miracles he actually wrought. The temptation was that of vanity. The language of the Psalmist seemed to encourage such an act. Ps. xci. 11, 12. The passage, however, expresses the protection of Divine Providence over the righteous, not the presumptuous. — *Angels* mean any kind of messengers or instruments employed to effect the purposes of God. — *They shall bear thee up.* Kuinoel remarks that this metaphor is taken from parents, who, in travelling over rough ways, lift up and carry their children over the stones in their path, lest they should trip and stumble upon them. — *Dash thy foot against a stone.* A proverbial expression, in both Greek and Hebrew, to denote any danger or misfortune.

7. The pure, discriminating eye of Jesus saw that the idea was not to be entertained. And as Scripture language occurred to his mind in its justification, so a passage did also in its condemnation. — *It is*

Digitized by Google

again: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Again, 8
the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and
showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of
them, and saith unto him: All these things will I give thee, if 9
thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto 10

---

written, Deut. vi. 16, *again*. This adverb, according to Campbell, ought to qualify *said*, and not *written*, and the sentence read thus: *Jesus again said unto him: It is written: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Tempt* here signifies to try, to assay, to put to the proof. It is not used in the sense in which it is in verse 2 of this chapter, of alluring to evil, but of making trial whether God would support one who should thus presumptuously cast himself upon his Providence. If we expose ourselves to needless dangers, we cannot reasonably expect to be saved. A wanton and voluntary periling of life or health cannot be right. We cannot promise ourselves the protection of Heaven, if we rashly presume upon it, and rush into difficulties without cause. The manner in which he resisted this temptation was a type of his conduct through his ministry. He tempted not God, put his power to no proof, by rashly exposing himself to danger and death; but exercised the greatest prudence, avoiding peril, when he could consistently with his duty, and never exercising that miraculous energy in his own behalf, which he so often and generously employed for the relief of others.

8. The third temptation is that of Ambition. Three great classes of enticements from duty are grouped together in this history of Jesus' temptations; those of Appetite, or the sensual nature; those of Vanity, or the gratification of Self-consequence; and those of Ambition, the love of fame and dominion, which Milton calls "the last infirmity of noble minds." It has been observed that this order is the natural order in the spiritual development of human nature. The first step is to subdue and keep the body under, the last to conquer the mind itself, and bring thought, hope, and the nobler powers all into captivity to Christ, which is true Freedom. — *Taketh him.* See ver. 5. — *All the kingdoms.* The world with its crowns and sceptres passed before his mind. Mighty cities with all their magnificence stood present to his eye. Earth and her inhabitants, her riches, and honors, and pleasures, lay at his feet. Going forth as the Messiah, would not his path lead directly to universal dominion? Were not the Jews ready to take him and make him King? How seductive was the blandishment thus spread before his mental vision!

9. *If thou wilt fall down and worship me.* Obeisance, and also religious worship, in the east, were performed partly by prostrating the body upon the ground. This was the base condition, on which Jesus might become the master of the world, and mightier than the Alexanders and Cæsars who had fought for its sovereignty. He must himself become the slave of Ambition. He must ignobly surrender up the birthright of the free, illimitable spirit, for the sake of this external rule over men. The great heroes of the earth, so reputed, have always been really as much in servitude, as the meanest follower in their retinue. Their spirits have been in "chains, slavery, and death."

Digitized by Google

him: Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."
11 Then the devil leaveth him; and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Their passions have ruled them with a cruel sway. They have "worshipped and served the creature." "Sin has reigned in their mortal bodies," and over their immortal spirits, and they have "obeyed the lusts thereof." Slaves they have been, indeed, to the lowest point of degradation. Jesus saw the dazzling picture of worldly ambition, "the kingdoms, and their glory," and their bravery, but he saw also what he must fall down to worship, in order that the glittering prize might be secured. He knew that he came to be the Spiritual King of mankind, not the servant of his own appetites and passions. The glorious vision that had dazzled the imagination faded. The words of divine truth came to his memory. Ambition was foiled, and the Satan fled.

10. *Get thee hence, Satan.* Or, get thee behind me. An expression of rebuke and condemnation. Far from me be such wickedness. Matt. xvi. 23. — *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.* Deut. vi. 13. God is the supreme object of worship and service. All other things must be subsidiary to the soul's devotion to him. The Saviour felt this in entering upon his mission. He renounced himself, suppressed Appetite, Vanity, and Ambition, put to flight every seductive tempter that came into his mind, and surrendered himself up to the purposes of God without qualification or reservation; a living, spotless sacrifice, "he offered up himself" upon the altar of God for the sake of the world. Our admiration of this wonderful being will be more increased, the longer we dwell upon the perfect self-denial and self-sacrifice he exercised against the temptations which beset him at this period of his life.

11. *Then the devil leaveth him.* Luke, iv. 13, says that "he departed from him for a season," which implies that he returned again at some future period. Here is one circumstance which goes to corroborate the interpretations above presented. The devil leaves Jesus for a season, and returns again. But returns in what manner? in a bodily form? No; it is not so said, but in the same manner in which it comes to all spiritual beings; in desires, fears, imaginings. In the garden of Gethsemane, the evening before the crucifixion, the tempter came. It is not described as a person. It came in the shape of fear and reluctance at the terrible fate before him. The flesh was weak, though the spirit was willing. But the tempter was again met and put to flight, and Jesus submitted to do and suffer all his Father's holy will. The impersonality of the tempter in the last case, taken in connexion with Luke's language, chap. iv. 13, furnishes a considerable presumption in favor of the theory advanced in this chapter, that the devil here spoken of is a personification of evil, not a conscious being. — *Angels came and ministered unto him.* Either divine messengers appeared, and satisfied his wants, or the cheering thoughts and happy feelings which sprang up in his own bosom at having resisted temptation successfully, and held fast his integrity, ministered as it were to him, satisfying his wants. Upon another occasion, when weary and

Digitized by Google

Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, 12 he departed into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, he came 13 and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim; that it might be fulfilled 14

thirsty, he stopped for refreshment at Jacob's well in Samaria. He was so spiritually exhilarated in his interview with the woman there, that hunger and thirst vanished, and when his disciples returned and pressed him to eat, he replied: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." "When the great struggle was over, and the tempter had fled, and the bosom of Jesus, no longer darkened by evil shadows, was filled with the serene triumph of moral victory, and endowed with new force wrought out by the recent strife, then the ineffable light of God, beaming within, irradiated every thing around him, and the desert smiled, and the sun grew brighter in the heavens, and grace and beauty invested the meanest things, until they overflowed with a divine presence and spirit, and seemed to be living, speaking ministers of God. In this divine frame he quitted the desert, and returned in the power of the spirit to Galilee." Luke iv. 14. The temptation of Jesus proves that he was not God, for "God cannot be tempted with evil." James i. 13.

12 – 25. For the parallel passages, see Mark i. 14 – 20; Luke iv. 14, v. 1 – 11. An interval of several weeks, or months, elapsed between the Temptation and the events related in verse 12. Many important incidents of Christ's ministry, occurring at this time, are related in the first nine chapters of John, excepting the sixth.

12. *John was cast into prison.* For an account of John's imprisonment, and its causes and results, see Matt. xiv. 3 – 12; Mark vi. 17 – 29; Luke iii. 19, 20. This event was a reason why Jesus should leave the country of Judea and withdraw into Galilee, then under the jurisdiction of Philip, where he could pursue his work with less molestation from the Scribes and Pharisees, who had become highly excited against him, and gather around him a band of disciples, who should be the preachers of his religion to the world. The ministry of his Forerunner was completed, and he now pursues his own with more activity, and makes preparation to perpetuate it after his death, through the instrumentality of the Apostles.

13. *Leaving Nazareth, dwelt in Capernaum.* Though Jesus had lived there many years with his parents, yet the unbelief of the people, and their abusive treatment of him personally, probably induced him to remove and fix his abode at Capernaum. Matt. xiii. 58; Luke iv. 16 – 30. — *Dwelt*, that is, made it his principal abode; yet he was absent much. Perhaps his mother and family moved thither. It was afterwards called his city. Nazareth lay near the middle of Lower Galilee. Capernaum was situated on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Its precise situation cannot now be determined. — *Which is upon the sea-coast*, i. e. the shore of the Sea of Galilee. — *In the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim.* In the Hebrew language, these tribes of Israel are called Zebulun and Naphtali. Gen. xlix. 13, 21. The portion of country assigned to them was located west and northwest of the Sea of Gali-

Digitized by Google

15 which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying: "The land
of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, *by* the way of the
16 sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people which
sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the
17 region and shadow of death light is sprung up." — From
that time Jesus began to preach, and to say: Repent; for the
kingdom of heaven is at hand.

lee, according to the division made by Joshua. Joshua xix. 10–16, 32–39. The word *borders* here means *boundaries*.

14. *Fulfilled*. Verified. — *Esaias the prophet*, i. e. Isaiah. See Is. ix. 1, 2. The prophet wrote during the irruption of the king of Assyria, and a short time before the ten tribes were carried away captive to Babylon. Looking beyond the dark present, he predicts the golden age of the Jews, when the oppressed and benighted would be enlightened and redeemed by the Messiah. Matthew quotes the passage probably by way of accommodation, rather than of literal accomplishment. The quotation is not exact, and seems to have been made from memory, but the sense is mainly preserved.

15. *By the way of the sea*. Lying along the sea-coast. — *Beyond Jordan*. This signifies in the vicinity of Jordan, on or along that river; not the country on the east side, as the words usually mean. — *Galilee of the Gentiles*. This province was divided into two parts, Upper and Lower. Upper Galilee was inhabited in a considerable measure by the Gentiles, or other people than the Jews, and hence was called Galilee of the Gentiles. This mixture of a foreign population was occasioned by Solomon giving to Hiram, in consideration of services done by him, twenty cities in the land of Galilee. 1 Kings ix. 11–13. These towns were in the neighborhood of Tyre and Sidon, and were peopled by Phœnicians, Egyptians, and Arabians.

16. *Darkness, light*. These terms are frequently used in Scripture for ignorance and knowledge of true religion, respectively. As the people were heathen who dwelt in this part of the country, they were involved in that moral darkness, which might without exaggeration be called *the region and shadow of death*, i. e. the darkest shadow. This was a vivid figure to describe the desperate moral condition of the land. "A shadow is caused by an object coming between us and the sun. So the Hebrews imagined death as standing between these regions and the sun, and casting a long, dark, and baleful shadow abroad on the face of the nation, denoting their great ignorance, sin, and woe. It denotes a dismal, gloomy, and dreadful shade, where death and sin reign, like the chills, damps, and horrors of the dwelling-place of the dead." Job x. 21; Psalms xxiii. 4; Jer. ii. 6.

17. *Jesus began to preach*. He had already for a considerable time been laboring in Judea, but he now began to preach in Galilee. John, being imprisoned, was now unable to carry forward the reformation of the people, and prepare them for the kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus takes up the great subject where he left it, and thus points out to the people that he was acting in conjunction with John, and was the person whom the Baptist had predicted. Jesus did not immediately declare himself as the Messiah

Digitized by Google

And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, 18 Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them: 19 Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they 20 straightway left *their* nets, and followed him. And going on 21 from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zeb-

in his preaching; for the popular feeling, thus aroused, would have brought the Jews into immediate collision with the Romans. By his labors and instructions he sought to open their prejudiced minds to the important fact that the Messiah was to be a spiritual, not a temporal King. See note on chap. iii. 7.

18. *Sea of Galilee.* This body of water went under the names of the Sea of Galilee, Sea of Tiberias, Lake of Gennesareth, or Cinnereth. It is included in Lower Galilee, and is situated east of north from Jerusalem, at the distance of seventy miles. The shape of the lake is oval, its length about sixteen miles, its breadth about six. Its waters are pure and sweet, and abound in fish. It is situated among high, steep hills, and is therefore subject to severe and sudden gusts of wind. Many flourishing cities once stood on its romantic shores, as Tiberias, Bethsaida, Capernaum, Chorazin, and Hippos. — *Two brethren.* It is an interesting circumstance, that several of the Apostles were related to each other, and also to Jesus, thus adding the ties of kindred to the sympathies of religion, and securing union and harmony. — *Simon called Peter, and Andrew.* Peter is the same as Cephas in Hebrew, and signifies a rock. Matt. xvi. 18; John i. 42. They were the sons of John, or Jona. They were already acquainted with Jesus, as appears from John i. 35–42. This was a kind of second call. — *Net.* A seine, or large drag net. The original word is not the same as that translated nets in verse 21. The fishery of this lake afforded a subsistence to a large number of persons.

19. *Follow me.* Equivalent to saying, "Become my disciples." Matt. viii. 22, ix. 9. — *Fishers of men.* You shall collect men into the kingdom of the Messiah, from the Jews and Gentiles. This promise was abundantly fulfilled in the multitudes which were converted by the Apostles. This instance is in harmony with Christ's general method of teaching, by which he employs events, trades, objects around him to illustrate and enforce spiritual truth. In classical authors, terms of hunting and fishing are often used in relation to acquiring adherents and disciples. Jesus calls not the rich, learned, refined, or powerful; resorts not to the schools of Jerusalem, but to the fishing-boats of Galilee, to obtain his disciples and apostles. Fishermen could better endure hardships. They had not been so deeply corrupted by worldliness, or spoiled by vain philosophy. They would, being uneducated men, also make it more apparent to the world that their doctrine was from heaven, not of men. Many great movements in society begin in the humbler walks of life.

20. *Straightway.* They obeyed the invitation without seeking to excuse themselves, or waiting till a more convenient season. — *Followed him.* They were probably ignorant to some extent, at this time, of the spiritual character of their Master.

21. *James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother.* James received

Digitized by Google

edee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father,
22 mending their nets; and he called them. And they immedi-
ately left the ship and their father, and followed him.
23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their syna-
gogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing

---

the title of James the Elder, or Greater, to distinguish him from James called the Less. John was the Evangelist, designated as the disciple whom Jesus loved. They had probably seen Jesus at Jerusalem, or elsewhere, for he was evidently no stranger to them. — *Ship*. Better, *boat*, or fishing vessel, or craft, such as were used on this inland water. — *Mending their nets*. These, according to the original, were small casting nets, and unlike that used by Simon and Andrew, verse 18. It has been ingeniously observed, that the inventor of a fictitious tale would not have been likely to have mentioned so trivial a fact as that they were mending their nets; trivial to one not engaged in that calling, but important to the fisherman himself. The mention of such a fact is one of those minute, but strong and beautiful filaments of truth and reality which are woven into every page of the Gospels; were not our eyes so dulled by custom and familiarity as to pass them over unheeded.

22. *Left the ship and their father, and followed him.* Matt. x. 37, xix. 27, 29. They felt it to be their duty to leave all, at the command of one whom they considered as a divine messenger, and perhaps as the Messiah; and though they had not yet, and did not have for a long time, correct ideas of the mission of their Master, yet they showed their religious faith and loyalty by adhering to one authorized and sent by God.

23. *Synagogues*. This word at first meant a collection of people, but, like the English word *church*, it afterwards was applied to the building where the assembly was held. The origin of Synagogues is unknown. They were probably introduced during or after the Babylonish captivity. They are not mentioned in the Old Testament. At first they were erected without the cities, in the fields, and usually near streams, or on the sea-shore, for the greater convenience of ablution; subsequently they were erected in cities, in proportion to the population. Jerusalem had nearly five hundred. Services were held in them on festival and fast days, and the first, second, and seventh days of every week. Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath. The exercises consisted in reading the law and the prophets; prayers, and addresses to the assembly, consisting chiefly of interpretations of Scripture. The whole was closed by a short prayer and benediction, to which the assembly responded, Amen. The officers in a Synagogue were ten in number. The most important were the Rulers, who constituted, according to Lightfoot, the "council of three," and the scribe, or minister, who prayed and preached. Mark v. 22; Luke iv. 20. The Synagogues opened a fine avenue for Christ and his Apostles to communicate their instructions to the Jewish people, for strangers were often invited to give a word of exhortation. Acts xiii. 15. — *Gospel of the kingdom*, i. e. Christianity. Gospel is compounded of two Saxon words, meaning *good*, and *message*, or news. Jesus preached the good news of Christianity, the glad intelligence of the mercy of God, and the broth-

Digitized by Google

all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria; and they 24 brought unto him all sick people, that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had

---

erhood and immortality of mankind. The word *kingdom* is used as implying that its subjects would all recognise and obey God, as the Supreme Lawgiver and Judge. — *Healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease*, i. e. every kind, not every case of sickness. According to Bloomfield, the original word, translated *sickness*, signifies a thoroughly formed disorder, and that translated *disease*, an incipient indisposition. Jesus had already, as we learn from John ii., v., begun to work his beneficent miracles. How active was his benevolence! He went about doing good, and proclaiming glad tidings.

24. *Syria* was at this period a Roman province, lying north and northeast of Palestine, and contiguous to it. — *All sick people*. Not literally every one, but great numbers of all kinds. — *Possessed with devils*. Or, to hold to the original, *possessed with demons*, demoniacs. None probably believe that the Jews supposed that these persons were possessed of devils, in the present acceptation of that word; but with demons, or the departed spirits of wicked, malignant men, evil genii, who entered into the living. Josephus says, "that those called demons are no other than the spirits of the wicked, that enter into men that are alive, and kill them, unless they can obtain some help against them." This was probably a superstition. Wetstein has conclusively shown that it is the unanimous opinion of physicians, whose authority is great upon such a subject, that demoniacs and lunatics were cases of natural disorders and insanity. The demoniacs sometimes believed, indeed, that they were possessed with evil spirits; but their testimony is not admissible; since the insane often imagine themselves to be what they are not; kings, generals, Christ, and even God. The symptoms, as given in the New Testament, of this class of sufferers, are precisely those of insanity. Their dislike to wearing clothes, their love of living in by-places, and wandering about, their recklessness in attacking persons, their sudden fits of violent convulsions, their fixed idea of being some thing or some body different from themselves, indicate a state of derangement. See Luke viii. 27 – 30; Matt. viii. 28; Mark ix. 20. When cured, the demoniacs are said to be restored to reason. Luke viii. 35. Jesus and his Apostles used the popular language of the times in reference to them. Nor was there any prevarication in it, any more than in our using the word *bewitched*, though we do not believe in witchcraft; and the expressions, St. Vitus' dance, and St. Anthony's fire, though we suppose that those saints have nothing to do with certain disorders of the human body called by those names. Jesus came not to reform institutions, but men, their makers; not language, but the spirit from which it sprang. When true religion had enlightened mankind, he foresaw, that the superstitions about demons, ghosts, and witches, would disappear, as the unseemly birds of night vanish before the shining of the sun. — *Lu-*

Digitized by Google

25 the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and *from* Decapolis, and *from* Jerusalem, and *from* Judea, and *from* beyond Jordan.

CHAPTER V.

The Sermon on the Mount.

AND seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain; and

natic. Not maniacs, but those affected by epilepsy, or falling sickness. Matt. xvii. 15. *Luna*, in Latin, means *moon*. It was supposed that persons affected by this disorder were made better or worse by the changes of that luminary. The same influence is supposed to affect the insane, and with some reason. Hence the insane are often called lunatics at the present day. — *Had the palsy.* This disorder affects the nerves of locomotion. Sometimes it seizes the whole body. Sometimes it fixes upon particular parts or limbs, and then takes various names according to its location. The cure, by our Master, of these severe chronic complaints afforded him an opportunity to do immense good, and furnished one of the strongest evidences of the divine authority of his mission and ministry. "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me," was his convincing argument.

25. *Decapolis.* Or, "the ten cities," from two Greek words having this meaning. This region was situated east of the Lake of Galilee. The names of the ten cities were, according to Pliny, Scythopolis, Hippos, Gadara, Dion, Pella, Gerasa, Philadelphia, Canatha, Damascus, and Raphana; but Ptolemy makes Capitolias one of the towns, and Josephus substitutes Otopos for Canatha. The vast throngs which assembled from the most distant parts of the land were drawn together, probably, by the astonishing news of Christ's miraculous power, with the wish to be cured of their diseases; with the sentiment of curiosity, wonder, ambition, highly exalted national hopes, and all the various motives that could actuate the human heart under circumstances so extraordinary. Multitudes no doubt came hoping to see him declare himself the Messiah, unfurl the banner of that mighty name, and strike for the liberties of Palestine, and the subjugation of the world. How widely they would be disappointed in their hopes is apparent from the following chapter.

CHAP. V.

As has been already said, the Jews were in expectation of a temporal, not a spiritual Messiah. The vast multitudes that thronged around the Saviour, and witnessed his miracles, and heard his words, were probably inflamed with the same worldly desires. And as the masses of living beings swelled larger and larger, these persuasions would be immensely deepened by sympathy. Heart would beat to heart, and deep call unto deep; all the strongest passions of human and Jewish nature were setting, like an ocean tide, in one direction, with an irresistible momentum. We can, by throwing ourselves into the scene, and imagining the circumstances under which Jesus spoke, gain some idea of the moral intrepidity, which impelled him to dissipate these brilliant but false anticipations, and, in the face of thousands, ready to raise the war-cry of a military leader,

Digitized by Google

when he was set, his disciples came unto him. And he opened 2
his mouth, and taught them, saying: Blessed *are* the poor in 3
spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed *are* they 4

and rush to conflict, rapine, and dominion, to deliver first the Beatitudes, and then his searching comments upon the opinions and practices of the Scribes and Pharisees.

The object of the Sermon on the Mount, as it has usually been called, was to give the collected multitudes some notions of the nature of his kingdom. He defines it as a kingdom within, a reign of the spirit. He settles the long vexed question of Happiness. He prostrates their worldly hopes, by showing that his followers must look for spiritual rewards only, rewards within themselves; the happiness that arose, not from riches, honors, or pleasures, but from meekness, humility, righteousness, peace, and purity. The groundwork of his system, the fundamental precepts, he lays down in a series of bold and beautiful paradoxes; at least, such they seem to most men, so small are their spiritual attainments. Then he proceeds to inculcate an infinitely higher toned morality and piety than that preached and practised by the teachers of the day. He proclaimed what may be called the Magna Charta of the spiritual life for all mankind, in this sublime address. It affords in itself alone an unanswerable argument for the truth of Christianity.

1 – 12. For a parallel passage see Luke vi. 20 – 26.

1. *Seeing the multitudes*, i. e. the multitudes mentioned in the last verse of the foregoing chapter. That was a reason for his speaking. He saw thousands around him, and he took the opportunity to explain his doctrines. What is here condensed in one continuous discourse was probably also delivered in parts to different people upon other occasions. — *He went up into a mountain.* Or, according to the original, *the* mountain. Some well known mountain or hill in the vicinity of Capernaum. Its location cannot now be determined. From this elevation he could more conveniently address the vast concourse. — *And when he was set.* Was seated. While teaching, the Jewish Rabbins were accustomed to sit, but their pupils kept a standing posture. Luke iv. 20; John viii. 2; Acts xvi. 13. — *His disciples came unto him.* The disciples were learners, or those who were taught. Probably the multitude are included in the term, as they were for the time his pupils, his disciples. So upon other occasions, those who followed his instructions, though not of the twelve, nor of his immediate attendants, were denominated disciples. John vi. 66. Nevertheless, others have understood by disciples those only who attached themselves to Jesus in the belief that he was the expected Messiah.

2. *He opened his mouth.* These words are pleonastic, or redundant, i. e. they do not add any thing to the meaning of the sentence. Pleonasm is a common figure of speech in the Bible.

3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit.* Some are in favor of the use of *happy* in this connexion; but *blessed* is a more forcible and solemn word, and, as Carpenter observes, has reference to the appointment and blessing of God. There is no verb in the original, and the translation would be more spirited thus, *Blessed the poor in spirit.* The declarations from verse 3 to 12 are sometimes called Beatitudes, because each of them begins with the word blessed,

Digitized by Google

5 that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed *are* the

or happy, the Latin for which is *beatus*. The qualities here pronounced blessed are directly the reverse of those which the Jews of that time, and the world generally, have so esteemed. Common opinion says, Blessed the rich. Jesus says, Blessed the poor. Common opinion says, Blessed the joyous, the elevated, the quick-spirited, the popular, the worldly-wise, the ambitious. Jesus says, Blessed the mourning, the meek, the spiritually aspiring, the merciful, the pure, the persecuted, the peace-makers. What a signal testimony to the divine origin of Christianity is presented in the fact, that its author flattered none of the prejudices or desires most current, but struck out a new path, taught a pure and lofty theology and philosophy, with great distinctness, which the wise men of old had only felt after, and caught a glimpse of, not fully found! He shows in these profound axioms, that religion promotes present and eternal felicity. — "In the first place," says Dewey, "our Saviour addressed a company of men, his disciples and others, who looked for their Messiah as a temporal king, who expected that he would deliver them from the Roman yoke, conquer the surrounding nations, and reinstate the Jews in all and more than all the possessions and splendors of the ancient monarchy. In the next place, he addressed a company who were accustomed to all those evasions of the moral law, which had been brought in by tradition, and which were daily multiplied by Jewish doctors and scribes. Let these things be borne in mind, and we shall see how far from being abstract, how pertinent, indeed, and pointed, is every word he utters." — *The poor in spirit*, i. e. according to Norton, those whose poverty is of the spirit; who feel that they are poor inwardly; who are conscious of their moral and spiritual destitution. Blessed are such, whether of much or little estate, (though the poor in goods were more likely, indeed, to feel their spiritual wants;) for they are prominent candidates for the kingdom of heaven. They are much happier than the spiritually self-satisfied, self-sufficient, Rev. iii. 17; who thank God that they are not as other men are, and who boast of a lineage from Abraham, and think that of course they abound in spiritual riches. — *For theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. Their state of mind entitles them to the kingdom of heaven. They will be its possessors, rather than those who feel rich in spirit, who are puffed up with their religious attainments. It will be observed throughout the beatitudes, that there is a tacit comparison instituted between the poor in spirit, the merciful, pure, &c., and the opposite characters, the proud, the cruel, the sensual, &c. Another point worthy of notice is, the correspondence of the rewards with the characters described. The merciful obtain mercy in return. The hungry are filled. The poor in spirit are heirs of the whole rich kingdom; the Gospel is theirs.

4. *They that mourn; for they shall be comforted*. It has been a question with interpreters, whether Jesus means those who mourn under a sense of their sins, or under the experience of afflictions. Both perhaps are included. Those who mourned under a sense of their spiritual destitution and unworthiness, who had that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of," would be rendered happy indeed under the Gospel, which tenderly cherishes every

Digitized by Google

meek; for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed *are* they 6

penitent emotion, and reveals a Father of mercy who is ready to forgive to the uttermost all that come unto him. Those who suffered in the cause of Christianity would be comforted under their trials by the great and entrancing promises it held out to them of eternal blessedness. Those who lost their goods, or friends, or were smitten by any earthly ills, would receive comfort unspeakable from that religion which clears up the mysteries of Providence, shows that a Father's eye watches over all, and a Father's hand conducts "the beautiful vicissitude." Jesus represents himself as coming "to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort all that mourn, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." He invites all that are weary and heavy laden to come unto him, and he will give them rest. His exhortation to his sorrowing disciples was, to "be of good cheer." Religion opens fountains of never failing consolation, and reaches the deepest sorrows of the mind. This beatitude, without doubt, was spoken with reference to the temper of his audience, as well as uttered to express an everlasting law of spiritual being. They were looking for mirth and revelry. The gay and the light-hearted would be the most welcome subjects to the new kingdom, in their judgment. The great Teacher holds up the dispensation to come, in a reversed view, as affording comfort to the unhappy and afflicted. "Not in pride, and plenty, and mirth; but in a lowly, sorrowing mind, amidst persecution, and tears, and blood, he saw the elements, the springs of human blessedness. Study those wonderful words of his, and see how true it is, in the very nature of things, that they only are blessed whom he pronounced so." Matt. xi. 28–30; John xvi. 20, 22; James v. 11.

"He that lacks time to mourn lacks time to mend.
Eternity mourns that."

5. *The meek.* We have no word in our language to express the true idea of Christian meekness. For what is called meekness is thought by most persons to signify poor-spiritedness, servility, than which nothing can be farther from the sentiment of Jesus. The meek are the mild, the amiable, the conciliating. The meek respect themselves too much to be proud, arrogant, and quarrelsome, and others too much to be either servile, or haughty. Jesus was meek, Matt. xi. 29, but he vindicated his rights, John xviii. 23. Paul was meek, patient in the reception of the grossest insults and injuries, but he was not tame and abject; he rebuked those who did him wrong. Acts xvi. 37, xxiii. 3. Meekness is a nice balance of qualities which in most men run into extremes, either too high or too low; either into sensitiveness and anger, or into timidity and meanness. It is one of the miracles of Christ's character, that it combined within itself, in loving harmony and unbroken wholeness, those traits which have been deemed contrary, discordant, and almost opposite: energy and gentleness; high intrepidity and lowliness of mind; the Lion and the Lamb. — *They shall inherit the earth.* Or, *the land.* The Jews in early times looked upon the land of Canaan as the sum of all blessings. To inherit it was one of their dearest hopes, one of the promised favors of God. The patriarchs dwelt gladly upon the prospect. Gen. xv. 7, 8; Ex. xxxii. 13. The whole nation looked wistfully towards it. The expectation cheered them

Digitized by Google

which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall

through the sea, the wilderness, and amidst their enemies. It was a sentiment next in depth and dearness to their subsequent longing after the Messiah. From this state of mind grew up a proverbial expression, which Jesus employs: *To inherit the earth*, or, *to possess the land*. It means, as its derivation shows, to obtain the greatest blessings, to acquire the highest good. The expression is elsewhere found, coupled with moral traits. Ps. xxxvii. 9, 11; Isaiah lx. 21. The hearers of Jesus were familiar, therefore, with his phraseology. How crushing to their eager hopes, to hear the quality of meekness thus extolled to the skies! Not the revengeful, the military chieftain, the ambitious leader; not those whose thoughts were on fire with the grandeur of power, the exultation of victory and vengeance; not these are blessed, not these shall attain to the greatest felicity. The meek, by the very qualities which others despise, are the happy ones. They are free from the evils, sorrows, and losses, which plague the malicious and passionate. They have peace. They inherit the earth, they obtain a universal empire over the hearts of mankind. They win the world, which the warrior's sword never yet has conquered. They are meet for the inheritance of heaven. This is the everlasting principle of moral existence. It is mournful to see, in history and in private life, how often it has been violated by those who have aspired to do "some great thing," and "grasped their ruin in their bliss."

6. *Hunger and thirst after righteousness.* In the Bible, as in all literature, what is spiritual is often illustrated by what is animal. Strong desires are called hunger and thirst. Truth is called bread, meat, drink. *Righteousness* means moral goodness, virtue, holiness. No wants are so frequent and imperious as those of food and drink. They come continually, and are never long satisfied; denied a few hours, they create unspeakable distress. What words, then, in the range of language, could more fitly and emphatically express the constant longings which the good feel for more goodness, the unquenchable desires of man's spiritual nature! — *They shall be filled.* "Here again, observe what a strict and grand truth or fact is enunciated in these words. It is only those who make goodness their supreme object of desire, who are ever filled, satisfied, happy, and at peace. Any other object we may hunger after and obtain, but we are not filled. This is the constitution of our nature." Under this beatitude, as well as the others, it may be observed, that what Jesus says has the most keen and pointed reference to the existing opinions and feelings of his auditors. It was no common-place truism. It was no cold abstraction. His declaration bore directly upon the views of his hearers, though it embodied also a principle true universally. He preached to their inmost experience, and they felt it, and were "astonished at his doctrine." They hungered and thirsted after national renown, individual pleasures, honors, and riches. They wanted a Messiah who might aid them in gratifying their unrighteous wishes. Their desires revolved about self as a centre. Jesus sought by his startling paradox to turn the current of their thoughts in another direction. Happy, says this profound Teacher, are those who are visited by the most earnest longings and aspirations after moral excellence; not

Digitized by Google

be filled. Blessed *are* the merciful; for they shall obtain 7
mercy. Blessed *are* the pure in heart; for they shall see God. 8

the worldly-minded, who are hankering after political advancement, and outward treasures, and the mad joys of conquest. "A true desire to know and do the will of God will secure its own end."

7. *Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.* The merciful are the compassionate, forgiving, those who feel for others' wants and woes, and seek to relieve them. They stand in contrast with the hard-hearted, cruel, revengeful, and pitiless. Our Saviour here reverses a favorite desire of the Jews around him. They panted to take vengeance on their enemies, their Roman oppressors. They nursed a stern and cruel hatred in their breasts. The fury with which it broke out and burned, forty years after, is evidence how thoroughly it had taken possession of them. Knowing their vindictive temper, Jesus, instead of still farther inflaming it, as they expected and desired, goes directly counter to it, and puts the benediction on the opposite quality of mercy. He elsewhere advances the same thought. Matt. v. 45, vi. 12, 14, 15, xviii. 23–35. The merciful will have mercy from both God and man. From God, for if we show kindness and forgiveness, we prove that we are deserving of the same ourselves. By forgiveness we imitate him, and assimilate ourselves to his character. A merciful temper has in itself an earnest of God's favor. We please him by our suppression of cruel and resentful feelings. He is ready, when he sees such charitable and merciful dispositions reigning in our characters, to do to us as we do to others. 2 Sam. xxii. 26, 27; Ps. xviii. 25, 26. From men, also, the merciful obtain mercy. Prov. xi. 17. Ordinarily, a person, who cherishes gentle and forgiving feelings towards mankind, will in the time of need be most likely to be recompensed with the same. How beautifully the great poet sings: —

"The quality of mercy is not strained:
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blessed:
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes;
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown. —
It is an attribute to God himself. —
How shalt thou hope for mercy, rend'ring none?"

8. *Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.* Purity of heart is insisted on in contradistinction to the outward and ceremonial purity enjoined by the Scribes and Pharisees, while within they were full of all manner of moral uncleanness. The pure are the innocent, the spotless, the holy, the undefiled. Their spirits have not contracted the blots and stains of sin, or else they have had them washed white again in the living waters that "flow fast by the oracle of God." — *See God.* A figure of sense to describe a spiritual state. To see God is to understand his character, realize his providence, and to have a close walk with him. By purity and faith, we may live as seeing him who is invisible. The expression perhaps has some allusion to the Jewish rites, as the ceremonially pure alone were admitted to the worship and presence of God in his temple. Ps. xxiv. 3, 4. In the east, likewise, where monarchs seldom appear to their subjects, to *see* them was accounted the highest of honors and privileges, and equivalent to enjoying their friendship. Prov. xxii. 29. To see God is to enjoy his favor. Said Origen: "God has no body,

Digitized by Google

9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers; for they shall be called the
10 children of God. Blessed are they which *are* persecuted for
righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

and therefore is invisible; but men of contemplation can discern him with the heart and understanding. But a defiled heart cannot see God; but he must be pure who wishes to enjoy a proper view of a pure being." Heb. xii. 14. As the clear mirror reflects distinctly the objects placed before it, so does the pure heart reflect the image of God.

9. *The peacemakers.* That is, those who are pacific in themselves, and promoters of peace around them. I sound no preparation of war, Jesus virtually said; I summon you to no fields of carnage; on the contrary, my beatitude is for the lovers and maintainers of peace and concord. — *They shall be called the children of God.* The word *called* is used, by an idiom of the Hebrew tongue, for the verb *to be.* The sense would be expressed in English thus: — They *will be* the children of God. Those who resemble God in his character, and are beloved and approved by him, are called, in Scripture phraseology, *his sons, his children.* Jesus was the Son of God in the strongest degree, because he possessed in full those excellences which secured his favor. Men, who use their influence to allay contentions and promote peace, peace in families, in neighborhoods, in nations, over the globe, — and every man may do something, many may do much, — liken themselves to the divine character. They vindicate their sonship to the God of Peace. They are the favored ones of Heaven. How full of honor, privilege, and joy, is such a relationship! 1 Cor. xiv. 33; Rom. xv. 33, xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Phil. iv. 9; Heb. xiii. 20.

10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted, &c.* Those that are unjustly despised, calumniated, imprisoned, tortured, killed. Persecution may consist of other injuries than those upon liberty, property, and life. Reputation may be attacked, odium excited, feelings lacerated, sincerity and goodness brought into groundless suspicion. The tongue and the pen can inflict deeper wounds than the sword. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. iii. 12. In the imperfect, misjudging, prejudiced communities of the freest lands, a man cannot act up to his sense of duty, in morals and belief, "dare singly to be just," "conferring not with flesh and blood," without falling upon evil tongues. The Apostle told the plain, but sad truth. We ought not, of course, to court persecution. But if its lighter or heavier blows fall upon us, *for righteousness' sake,* on account of our love and practice of moral goodness, on account of our religious independence, and devotion to duty, then happy are we. Happier we are, unspeakably, than the persecutor; happier than those who repress honest convictions because they are unpopular, and who seek to please men, rather than God. — *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* "Here also is a sentiment in direct opposition to the prejudices of the Jews. It must have been no slight mystery to them, how the kingdom of heaven was to belong to the persecuted, the despised, and the oppressed. In that kingdom they fondly hoped all their natural evils would cease, that there would be ease, and plenty, and health, and profound peace, and joy. And yet

Digitized by Google

Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your re- 11 12

this Teacher, upon whom all eyes are fixed, to whom all are listening, pronounces the humble, the lowly, and the persecuted, the true and happy possessors of the heavenly kingdom. To us what truth is now unfolded in the language of Jesus! They who have suffered in the cause of truth and goodness, what a glorious dominion is theirs! How they reign in the hearts of a grateful posterity! And as believers in the doctrine of immortality, we discern them living in a higher state, and reigning in the affections of myriads of intelligences."

11. *When men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you.* Better, every kind of evil against you. The thought of the last verse is here expanded yet farther. The third person is changed to the second, bringing the idea more directly home to his disciples. Revilings were heaped upon Jesus. He was called a Samaritan, a term of bitter reproach, and was said to be in league with Beelzebub, the prince of demons. He was accused of being insane, and the pains of crucifixion were sharpened by the scoffs of the bystanders. But he reviled not again. His disciples had to bear the derision of their enemies, the vulgar abuse of the crowd, or the lofty scorn of the philosophers and princes of their day. But their prayer was, "let not this sin be laid to their charge." How much nobler and happier these victims of the world's ridicule and hate, than the objects of popular adulation! They were persecuted, *prosecuted*, as the force of the word suggests. They were accused in courts, and thousands, like the Saviour, were illegally and unjustly condemned to death. The tongue of slander was also busy against the early Christians. They were loaded with charges the most groundless. All manner of evil was falsely reported against them. Their holy doctrines were grossly misrepresented. Their innocent ceremonies were tortured into crimes. Their benevolent efforts were turned into treason to the state, and blasphemy to the gods. — *Falsely.* There is point in this word. For, if the allegations brought against them were well grounded, they would have been far from being blessed. 1 Peter iii. 13 – 18, iv. 14 – 16. — *For my sake,* i. e. in the cause of the Christian religion. There was no argument more powerful, to convince the world of the truth and value of the Gospel in early times, than the meek and patient endurance of their wrongs by the first Christians. This won the hearts of their most inhuman persecutors. And cases are stated, where the executioner, moved by their noble bearing, suddenly embraced the truth, and perished himself by the very instrument with which he was about to inflict death upon them.

12. *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, &c.* The Jews looked for joys in a temporal, triumphant reign of their deliverer; Jesus, in overturning their hopes, would not overturn their happiness, but informs them, that they would derive the highest degree of pleasure from the labors and sufferings consequent upon their adhesion to him. Their *reward* would not be like the uncertain favors of princes, but spiritual, secure, and everlasting, laid up in heaven. It would be a reward,

Digitized by Google

ward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which
13 were before you. —— Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the
salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is

not limited to the gratification of the senses, not a poor satisfaction of some temporal, superficial desire, but large, deep, intense, commensurate with the vast and undying aspirations of immortals.— *So persecuted they the prophets. Prophets* include all religious teachers, whether they predicted future events or not. The language of Jesus is, You need not be surprised at the prospect of persecution; it is no more than all the great and good have suffered. In this respect my dispensation is analogous to that of Moses. The religion of heaven will stir up the hostility of a bad world, and its promulgators will inevitably be the first objects on which that hostility wreaks itself. Moses met with disobedience, taunts, and insurrection. Exod. xvii. 2, xxxii. 1; Num. xvi. 13. Elijah was in hazard of his life, and hunted like a wild beast. 1 Kings xviii. 10, xix. 2, 3. Elisha was mocked at even by the children in the street. 2 Kings ii. 23. Jeremiah was put in the stocks, beaten, cast into a most loathsome dungeon, and repeatedly menaced with death. Jer. xx. 2, xxvi. 8–15, xxxii. 2, xxxvii. 13–16, xxxviii. 6. The faithful Three were placed in a red-hot furnace. Dan. iii. 21, 22. Daniel was thrown into a den of lions. vi. 16. The prediction of the Saviour was verified in the persecution of his Apostles and disciples, as we learn from the history of the planting of Christianity. But they joyed in stripes, imprisonment, and death; and, sustained by a good conscience, their Master's example, and the hopes of heaven, they sang "their hymns of lofty cheer" in the dungeon, and at the stake.

13. *Ye are the salt of the earth.* Livy, the Roman historian, calls Greece *sal gentium*, the salt of the nations. Salt is used for preserving articles of food from taint, and for imparting to them a stimulating flavor. Hence, naturally, it became a symbol of preservation, of spiritedness, and wisdom. Mark ix. 50; Col. iv. 6. Some understand by the salt, the Jews. But the sense is, more probably, that the disciples would be the salt of the whole world. Through them, the Gospel would season, inspirit, and purify the corrupt race. By hearing him, they had been summoned to a great moral enterprise. The hopes of the earth rested on them. It was a caution to discharge so great a trust, and not lose their savor; not desert him, and prove false to their privileges, and duties to the world. The same warning holds morally good through all ages. Christians are the salt of the earth, the preservers from moral putrefaction. Let them not become insipid, lifeless, good for nothing. — *If the salt have lost his savor, &c.* By exposure to the atmosphere, rock salt loses its useful properties, and becomes tasteless. *His* is frequently used for *its* in the Scriptures. Maundrell, in his Travels in the East in 1697, describing the valley of salt, near Aleppo, says, "Along on one side of the valley, towards Gibul, there is a small precipice, about two men's length, occasioned by the continual taking away of the salt, and in this you may see how the veins of it lie. I broke a piece of it, of which that part that was exposed to the rain, sun, and air, though it had the sparks and particles of salt, yet it had perfectly lost its savor; the in-

Digitized by Google

thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. 14
A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid; neither do men light 15
a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so 16

---

ner part, which was connected to the rock, retained its savor, as I found by proof." You are to be the preservers and purifiers of the world; but if you become corrupt, what means will there be of reforming and purifying you! Woe unto you, if, when you are thus privileged and commissioned, you prove unfaithful to your high trust. You will be castaways and vagabonds. — *Cast out, and trodden under foot of men.* It is supposed by some commentators, that allusion is here made to a bituminous salt procured from the Dead Sea, which, as it had a fragrant odor, was sprinkled over the sacrifices in the Temple to counteract the smell of the burning flesh; and as it sometimes spoiled when laid up, by exposure to the sun and air, it was scattered over the Temple pavements in wet weather to prevent slipping; thus it was cast out and trodden under foot. The illustration possesses great point, if the practice was observed in our Saviour's day.

14. *Ye are the light of the world.* The most eminent Jewish Rabbins were called "the lights of the world." Jesus applies the title to those who heard and followed him. They would enlighten the world, not with the rays of material light, but, what was of transcendent consequence, with a moral illumination, chasing away the darkness of superstition and sin. Christ said of himself, that he was the light of the world, the sun of the moral universe. He calls John the Baptist "a burning and shining light." Paul denominates the Philippian Christians as those that "shine as lights in the world." It is commonly said of illustrious men, that they are "the lights of their age and country." Light, as well as heat, is requisite to vivify the cold, benighted world. — *A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.* Our Lord was accustomed to take his similes from the most obvious things; from the sun in the sky, the birds flying through the air, the lilies in the field. On this occasion, probably a city was in view from the eminence on which Jesus delivered this address; perhaps that of Japhia or Bethulia. — Christians have not ceased to be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, and cities set on hills. They are seen and read by all men. Their characters and conduct are criticized. If true, they spread moral fertility and beauty around them; if false, they defeat the cause they profess to aid.

15. *Neither do men light a candle, &c.* Luke xi. 33. *Candles* were not used then. The word should have been translated *lamp;* also *lamp-stand*, instead of *candlestick*. For bushel, we ought to read *measure;* the word in the original signifies a vessel of less capacity than a peck. The sentence contains a proverbial phraseology, to express, depriving any thing of its utility by putting it to some use the farthest possible from the one for which it was intended. Religion is not to be kept secret, any more than it is to be ostentatiously obtruded upon the notice of mankind; but it should

Digitized by Google

shine before men, that they may see your good works, and
17 glorify your Father which is in heaven. —— Think not that I
am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come

shine naturally and unconsciously out of the face and behaviour of every Christian.

16. It is wrong to act for appearance's sake. We should have a higher principle of conduct than the praise of men. Our foremost aim should be to glorify our Father in heaven. His glory, the greatness and goodness of his character, is hidden from the sight of the worldly. But in the good man it flames out, and the blindest can see it. A virtuous being is the most noble manifestation of the glory of God in the world. For example, the purest splendors of the Deity stream forth from the face of Jesus Christ. He made God to be known, revered, and obeyed, and consequently glorious in the eyes of men. Every Christian, however humble the sphere of his action, can do something toward the same holy end. He can praise his Father, can acknowledge his resplendent attributes, can win others "to work and worship so divine." The goodness and happiness of mankind are the glory of the Creator. And the humblest creature that lives can advance that goodness, and augment that happiness in himself and others. No matter if he is poor, sick, ignorant, and unknown; he shines, a cheering and a guiding light, if he has caught the spirit of religion. His lowly hovel is illuminated with a serene ray, his comfortless chamber is irradiated with a light above the brightness of the sun; the star of God's glory, that never sets, comes and stands over the place where that good spirit tabernacles and suffers. He lives with the best effect, though unaware of his influence.

"How far the little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed on a naughty world."

17. *Think not that I am come to destroy, but to fulfil.* After showing in the Beatitudes, that the worldly hopes of the Jews were without basis, Jesus proceeds to anticipate and correct an erroneous impression, which would naturally and immediately arise, that he came to destroy the Jewish system. He came not, he says, as they might hastily infer from what he had been saying, for the purpose of destruction, but of fulfilment. He came not to substitute violently one scheme for another, but to supersede an old system, established for temporary uses, "a shadow of good things to come," with a new and perpetual one. His was the completion of that splendid line of revelations of which the law and the prophets were the beginnings. He was so far from wishing to destroy, subvert, or impair the venerable authority of the Law and the Prophets, that the very end of his mission was to fulfil, finish, crown those disclosures of God, with others in harmony with them, but more advanced, and for the reception of which those had served to prepare the world. — *The law*, i. e. the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, or, more specifically, the Mosaic legislation. — *The prophets*, i. e. the books and compositions which the prophets had written, or the course of religious teaching which had succeeded the Mosaic legislation. The Jewish revelation was designed for a particular people and a limited time. It was preparatory to a universal and permanent religion. It was the schoolmaster to train men for the coming

Digitized by Google

to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till 18
heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise
pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore 19

of the Great and Perfect Teacher. The master idea, running as a staple through the whole Jewish economy, is THE UNITY OF GOD. Line upon line, precept upon precept, this truth was wrought through centuries into the core of the Jewish heart. This noble principle, with the inferences which diverged from it in every direction, and reached to every motive of life, and every hope of the soul, opened the way for those fuller, tenderer disclosures of truth, which Jesus lived and died to make. The Jewish dispensation is not therefore to be judged by the Christian, nor the Christian by the Jewish. Each has its purpose in the counsels of Heaven, and each, when rightly understood, is seen to bear those beautiful characters of wise design, and benevolent adaptation, which are written all over the universe.

18. This verse expands and confirms the sense of the latter clause of the preceding. — *Verily.* The Greek work is *amen*, which is used at the end of prayers. It expresses strong affirmation, *so be it, truly, certainly.* Our Master uses it in many places, to emphasize what he says. Compare Matt. xvi. 28, with Luke ix. 27. — *Till heaven and earth pass.* Wakefield thus paraphrases the verse: — "For verily I say unto you, the heaven and the earth will sooner pass away, than one jot or one tittle of the law be destroyed, and fail of its accomplishment." See Luke xvi. 17. The heaven and earth signify the whole creation, the universe. The expression was no doubt a proverbial one, fitted to convey a vivid idea of its perpetuity, to say that a thing would last as long as the universe itself. — *One jot.* Jot or yod, is the name of י, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. — *One tittle.* This signifies the small points, or the flourishes, made underneath or at the corners of the Hebrew letters, and on the accuracy of which the meaning of a word or sentence often depended. The Rabbins were accustomed to say, that an alteration of one of these little marks would destroy the world, because it would change the divine commandments. In transcribing the Old Testament, it was a sufficient reason for destroying the whole manuscript, if a mistake had been committed in reference to these small points and curvatures. The idea is, not only that the law in general was permanent, but that even its least requisitions, and the spirit they breathed, were of fresh, eternal obligation. The smallest part of God's commandments never can become null. The ceremonial and judicial institutions of the Jews were intended, at the time they were made, to be only temporary. But the moral truths, the spiritual requisitions, of Judaism were not to be abated one atom, but to be carried out to perfection, fulfilled by the Messiah. — *Till all be fulfilled*, i. e. till all the purposes, contemplated in the Mosaic dispensation, are effected; till the gracious designs of God, commencing in the earliest revelations, are completed under Christianity. The Jews would suspect, from what Jesus had said, that he came to subvert the law and the prophets. By no means, is his language. The spirit of those revelations is strictly imperishable; it is to last and deepen till the final consummation of all things. I came to breathe into it

Digitized by Google

shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that, except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the

---

new energy, and send it forth over the globe, conquering and to conquer, till the purposes of God are at last all accomplished.

19. This verse is intelligible only when we learn that the Scribes and Pharisees, the teachers and casuists most in vogue, were accustomed to make distinctions between moral precepts; calling some of greater, and others of less obligation, and holding that the transgression of one of the less commandments was a venial offence. This method humored the bad propensities of mankind, and vitiated all strictness of morality. Matt. xxii. 36. — *One of these least commandments*, i. e. more properly rendered, *one of the least of these commandments*, i. e. the laws of Moses, though some with less probability refer the sentence to the doctrines of Jesus which follow. He appears to continue the thought started in the preceding verses. Suppose not, he says, that I have any hostility to the Mosaic system; on the contrary, those will be lightly esteemed among my followers, who set themselves up as violators and disparagers of that dispensation of God, or who, like the Scribes and Pharisees, whilst they profess great fidelity to it, virtually nullify its injunctions by their traditions, and divisions of the law into duties of greater and less weight; but they will be the most honored who practise and inculcate universal obedience, and who, in becoming the advocates of Christianity, acknowledge also the finger of God in the law and the prophets. So at the present day, whosoever shall break, or undervalue one class of duties, one set of divine laws; whosoever shall discard morality in his zeal for piety, or neglect piety because he is a good moral man, falls under the rebuke of this verse. Whilst one who does and teaches all the commandments, gives to every duty its place, is faithful to man, and God, and his Saviour, shall be great in the spiritual kingdom, and an eminent Christian.

20. *Your righteousness*, your virtue, goodness. — *The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.* They professed great piety and benevolence. They thanked God, that they were not as other men are. Their claims to superior virtue seem to have been acquiesced in by their countrymen. For it was a common saying, that, if but two men were admitted into the kingdom of heaven, one of them would be a Pharisee, and the other a Scribe. But, notwithstanding their bold pretensions, our Saviour, looking at the heart, detected and exposed their hypocrisy. They tithed the smallest herbs, but omitted those vast concerns, judgment, mercy, and faith. Their religion was of appearance, not of reality. They held, that the thoughts of the heart were not sinful. They were scrupulous to a fault in things of small consequence, but they indulged with the greater latitude in selfishness and sensuality. They appeared beautiful outwardly, no garnished sepulchre more so, but it was with numbers only a fair seeming; descending within, as Jesus did, a mass of moral corruption, as of the charnel-

Digitized by Google

Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of 21
old time: "Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall
be in danger of the judgment." But I say unto you, that who- 22

house, disclosed itself. What! the people were ready to exclaim to Jesus; is not the goodness of such persons as our religious teachers sufficient to save us? So far from that, is his reply, your virtue must far exceed theirs, or you can lay no claim to be my disciples. My standard is a far higher and purer one than theirs. — *Ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*, i. e. you cannot become my disciples, or Christians. The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees is outward, technical, meagre, hypocritical; the righteousness of my followers must be of the heart, living, sincere, universal, the unqualified obedience of the whole man. Having thus stated the general principle, that he should require a loftier virtue than the current examples of the day, he proceeds to specify cases; first in regard to Murder; secondly, verse 27, Adultery; thirdly, verse 33, Oaths; fourthly, verse 38, Retaliation.

21. Jesus proceeds to quote and comment upon the commandments of Moses, the traditions, and the glosses which had been put upon them, and shows what he meant by a better righteousness than that of the Scribes and Pharisees. First, in relation to Murder. — *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time*, i. e. it is matter of tradition. Instead of *by them of old time*, some read, *to them of old time:* to the ancients, meaning to the contemporaries of Moses. Jesus did not decry the piety and morality of the Mosaic standards, but censured the interpretations, often lax, which were put upon the original commands. — *Thou shalt not kill*, i. e. thou shalt not commit murder. Ex. xx. 13. This precept was Mosaic, divine. — *Whosoever shall kill, &c.* This was an explanation, or tradition, afterwards appended to the law, referring merely to the temporal punishment consequent upon the overt act of murder. Jesus went down to the source from which the act originated; the thoughts and feelings of the heart; and showed their criminality and danger, even when they did not actually result in the deed of violence. — *In danger of*, i. e. responsible to, obnoxious to. — *The judgment.* This signifies not a judicial sentence, but a municipal court by which sentence was passed, judgment pronounced. The Talmudists, or writers among the Jews of the third and fourth centuries after Christ, describe this court as consisting of twenty-three persons; but Josephus, whose authority is to be preferred, represents it as a tribunal of seven, which sat in each city or town, with the Levites as attending officers. As is evident from the reference of the text, causes of importance came before them; and severe punishments, as strangling, and beheading, were inflicted at their command.

22. *But I say unto you.* Jesus speaks with authority, with a natural tone of superiority and command, which was felt to be genuine by his hearers, and different from the hollow assumption of the Scribes. Chap. vii. 29. His special commission from God gave a godlike weight to his words; as an ambassador from an earthly king speaks and negotiates with the energy and

Digitized by Google

soever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever
23 shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. There-

decision of the sovereign in whose stead he acts. Worldly teachers had glossed over the strict truth with their own interpretations; Jesus rends them away, and, backed by the power and wisdom of God, uses the simple but lofty form of address: "But *I* say unto you." Such an expression, in any but a special, divinely authorized, supernaturally gifted messenger of God, would excite any thing but respect. In Jesus it is natural and graceful. He utters his great truths with an easy air of authority, notwithstanding his humble origin, which convinces us that he had a right from above to decide, and that his word was final. — *Angry with his brother without a cause.* 1 John iii. 15. — *Brother* means any man. All mankind, in the view of Christianity, are brothers. — *Angry without a cause*, i. e. either without an adequate reason, or to an excessive degree. This is to be understood in the two last clauses, as well as the first. Jesus calls not only the overt act of violence criminal and punishable, but also the state of feeling from which the act originated, the bad passions causelessly and excessively inflamed. He deals with the heart. — *In danger of the judgment*, i. e. liable to the condemnation of the inferior court of judicature; or rather, to express the exact sense, is liable to such a punishment from God as may be parallel with that which this tribunal commands to be inflicted. — *Raca.* A Syriac or Chaldaic word, expressing great contempt, equivalent to fool, dolt, simpleton. A commandment of God may be violated in spirit, when it is kept in the letter. The feeling of bitterness and contempt, which prompts men to call each other by opprobrious names, often results in the actual deed of violence and murder. So far as these are its natural consequences, the feeling itself is of the like dark guilt as its results. — *The council*, i. e. the Sanhedrim, the chief tribunal among the Jews. It was established in the time of the Maccabees, about two hundred years before our Saviour. Civil and ecclesiastical cases fell beneath its jurisdiction. It could pass sentence of death, but depended upon the Roman governor to carry it into effect. Its number was about seventy, consisting of the highest officers of the Jewish commonwealth. They commonly held their sessions at Jerusalem in a room near the temple. Mention is often made of this court in the New Testament. Our Saviour was condemned by it, and his apostles were arraigned before it. The sense is, that he who used a word of contempt and scorn towards his fellowman, would expose himself to a condemnation and punishment, under the government of God, equivalent and parallel to that which it came within the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrim to pronounce. — *Thou fool.* This translation is nearer the sense of Raca, used before, than of the word in the original. The term is *Moreh.* It means not fool, but impious, apostate, wretch; implying a low moral condition, as Raca does a contemptible intellect. — *Hell fire.* In the Greek, *the Gehenna of fire.* Gehenna is a word of Hebrew origin, signifying the valley of Hinnom. It was situated near the city of Jerusalem on

Digitized by Google

fore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest

the east. The brook Kedron ran through it. Horrid sacrifices of the heathen god Moloch were performed in this valley. On this account, the place was afterwards held in such abhorrence, that it was made the common receptacle of the filth of the city. The carcasses of animals, the bodies of executed criminals, were thrown into this place. Fires were kept constantly burning to consume these things, and prevent the atmosphere becoming pestilential. Worms were frequently to be seen preying upon the remains of the filth and rubbish of the populous city. Hence very severe and disgraceful punishments, and the retributions of the future world, in some places, are depicted by the figure of the Gehenna of fire, or the constantly burning fires of the valley of Hinnom, and the worms that are always to be found there. In using this term, our Lord employed the current language of his day and nation. His idea seems to have been, that for the most opprobrious words, and the corresponding temper which prompted their use, a man would be subject, whether in this life or the future one, to the punishment of God, — a punishment as much severer in degree than those aforementioned, as the burning fires and undying worm of the valley of Hinnom, would exceed in severity the punishment, inflicted by the tribunal of Seven and the Sanhedrim. Three degrees of anger are specified, and three corresponding gradations of punishment, proportioned to the different degrees of guilt. Where these punishments will be inflicted, he does not say, he need not say. The man, who indulges any wicked feelings against his brother man, is in this world punished, his anger is the torture of his soul, and unless he repents of it, and forsakes it, it must prove his woe in all future states of his being. Jesus thus illustrates the principle of his religion, in contradistinction to the erroneous instructions of the Scribes and Pharisees, that not only the outward act, but the inward feeling and the words of the lips, are subject to the laws of God. Unjust or immoderate anger, contemptuous epithets, and passionate reproaches, were in fact breaches of that law of social duty, every violation of which was an offence of greater or less magnitude against the Supreme Lawgiver and Judge.

23. It is said that the Scribes required restitution in money matters, but that in other things, they held that gifts and sacrifices would expiate all offences not cognizable by the judge. But our Saviour takes a different ground. He teaches that reconciliation is better than sacrifices, and that a gift to God is vain and unacceptable, so long as the giver is in the practice of violating his social obligations. Having in the preceding verses warned his hearers against anger and scorn towards their human brethren, he now points out the true course of conduct, when the offence has actually been committed; it is, first of all, to be reconciled; even to postpone the services and sacrifices of divine worship, till the broken chain of brotherly love is again united. The duty of benevolence is paramount to ritual observances. But the Jewish teachers inculcated the reverse. —*If thou bring thy gift to the altar.* The freewill offering and sacrifices of the Jewish worshippers were called *gifts.* The *altar* was situated in front of the temple. If a person had gone so far as to bring his gift to the very altar, to the place where it was to

Digitized by Google

24 that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift
before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy
25 brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine

be offered, and there, just before he made his offering, recollected that there was matter of difference and ill-will between him and his brother, he was to turn back from the temple of God, and seek reconciliation with his fellow-man, and then he might reasonably trust that his gifts would be accepted by the Almighty. — *Remember est* should be *remember*, grammatically. — *That thy brother hath aught against thee*, i. e. has, or thinks he has, any just cause of complaint. Jesus mentions the case of one who has offended, not one who has been wronged. The person who has done wrong to another, or who, that other believes, has done wrong, is to seek reconciliation with his injured brother rather than perform ceremonial observances. But if it be the other way, and his brother has wronged him, there is nothing in the lessons of Jesus to show that his offerings will be unworthy until the affair is settled. It then devolves upon the man who has done the wrong to seek the reconciliation. Still it is the fruit of a Christian spirit to forgive, to forget, to be always ready to receive the advances of reconciliation from those who have ill used us; to desire most earnestly to have others in charity with us, as well as to be ourselves in charity with them.

24. *Leave there thy gift before the altar*. Gifts were delayed or rejected sometimes on account of their impropriety, or because they had some blemish, or the person offering them was disqualified by uncleanness, or for some other cause. But Jesus speaks of delaying the gift for a new reason, the *moral* unfitness and unpreparedness of the giver. Such an idea had not probably entered the minds of the Jewish teachers, wedded as they were to technicality and ceremonies. — *Go thy way. Seek* reconciliation. Do not wait till the injured person, or he who supposes himself injured, comes to you. But go to him. And this would be practicable for those who came from the farthest parts of the land, for these gifts were offered on general festival days, when the nation was together at Jerusalem, and every man could find his neighbors and acquaintances. — *Be reconciled*. Not only cherish right feelings yourself, but make reparation, explanation, or whatever will satisfy, within the bounds of reason, your offended, injured fellow-man, and thus obtain his pardon and love. Let there be reconciliation on both sides. — *Then come and offer thy gift*. Having discharged your duty to man, you will be prepared to worship God. The spirit of these instructions, though wrapped in Jewish phraseology and imagery, is for us as well as for them of old. If we would worship our Maker acceptably, our prayers must rise from hearts baptized into the love of man, as well as into the belief of God. The tongue we use in devotion must not utter cursings towards mankind, as well as blessings towards the Father; else the cursings will devour the blessings, and our supplications will fall to the earth dead. If faith be one of the wings of prayer, love is the other.

25. See Luke xii. 58, 59. Jesus, having already shown, that to indulge in malevolent feelings, and use opprobrious epithets, is highly criminal, and that the exercise of a conciliating temper should take precedence of ritual observances and

Digitized by Google

adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time: "Thou shalt not

acts of worship, now goes on to show, that, merely as a matter of self-interest, we should seek to live in brotherly love, and settle all difficulties immediately with our fellow-creatures. — *Agree with thine adversary quickly, &c.* Be, or make friends with him. This probably had reference to the Roman law concerning injuries, by which the plaintiff, the adversary, as it is here translated, could, without the formality of a summons or writ, drag the offender with his own hand before the court. On the way he had however an opportunity of settling the affair, if he pleased, and of being set at liberty. But if the case were brought before the judge, a fine would be imposed, and, if unable to pay it, the prisoner would be held in confinement until the debt was discharged. It is a maxim of prudence, therefore, as well as a dictate of love, to seek reconciliation with those whom we have offended and injured, and to do it at the earliest opportunity. The ill consequences of not being reconciled to our fellow-men are pictured forth in judicial phraseology. The longer the difficulty was delayed, the harder it would be to be settled, the more aggravated its evil consequences. The passage is designed rather to point out the importance of early reparation and reconciliation in regard to our fellow-men, than to be violently construed as an admonition against delay in religion, in general, or in our duties more especially to our Maker. In the interpretation of Scripture, there is as much danger of attributing a sense to a passage which was never in the writer or speaker's mind, as of mistaking the sense; as much danger of erring as to the *degree*, so to speak, as to the *kind* of meaning. — *At any time.* These words are superfluous; not in the original. — *The officer.* The one who executed the sentence; the sheriff, or prison-keeper. Reference is supposed to be made in this verse to the oppression of the Romans, which rendered it expedient to settle difficulties in private, rather than to resort to "hood-winked justice."

26. He describes the evil of delaying to be reconciled, but the advantages of regaining peace and good-will are obvious, and therefore not mentioned. In this verse the language of the courts is still kept up. There would be no deliverance from jail till the last farthing was paid. If reconciliation is not early sought and secured, irreparable troubles will befall the injurer. He will not escape until he has expiated fully the offence. He will be visited with unmitigated retribution, who seeks not by penitence and confession to avert it beforehand. — *Paid the uttermost farthing*, i. e. paid the whole debt. What is here called a farthing was a small brass coin, equal to about four mills of our money.

27. The last paragraph relates to the sixth commandment, to Murder, and the violation of social good-will. This one treats of the seventh, of Adultery and Divorcement. — *By them of old time.* Should be, *to* them of old time. But the words

Digitized by Google

28 commit adultery." But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her
29 already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck

are not considered genuine in this place, since they are not found in a large number of the most ancient versions and manuscripts. The distinguished critic Griesbach therefore rejects them as spurious. — *Thou shalt not commit adultery.* Ex. xx. 14. Our Lord would not, by thus quoting the commandments, weaken their authority, but aims to prove that they should be kept in the spirit as well as the letter, and that the Jewish maxim, that the thoughts and desires were not sinful unless acted out, was false and dangerous. Our Father takes the will for the deed, both in the virtuous and the vicious.

28. *To lust after her.* Or, more explicitly, in accordance with the original, *in order* to cherish impure wishes and feelings. "Men, who can only judge by external actions, give the name of a crime merely to the last act; but in the estimation of God, who searches the heart, he hath committed the crime who hath intended to do it, or hath wished it done. The law of the ten commandments does not expressly prohibit all offences, but only such as are most atrocious of their kind. Thus it does not prohibit all falsehood to our neighbor, but false witnessing against him; nor every injury to his property, but theft; nor all unlawful commerce between the sexes, but only adultery. Christ, however, here informs us, that whoever indulges himself in any thing which may lead to that offence is guilty in a certain degree of the crime of adultery." The impure desire is therefore to be abhorred and shunned as being akin to the criminality of the actual deed. 2 Peter ii. 14. "By obscene anecdotes and tales; by songs and jibes; by double meanings and innuendoes; by looks and gestures; by conversation and obscene books and pictures, this law of our Saviour is perpetually violated. If there be any one sentiment of most value for the comfort, the character, the virtuous sociability of the young, one that will shed the greatest charm over society, and make it the most pure, it is that which inculcates perfect delicacy and purity in the intercourse of the sexes. Virtue of any kind never blooms where this is not cherished. Modesty and purity once gone, every flower that would diffuse its fragrance over life withers and dies with it. There is no sin that so withers and blights *every* virtue, none that so enfeebles and prostrates every ennobling feeling of the soul, as to indulge in a life of impurity. How should purity dwell in the heart, breathe from the life, kindle in the eye, live in the imagination, and dwell in the intercourse of all the young!" — *Barnes.*

29. *Right eye.* The mention of the eye is naturally connected with the preceding verse, where it speaks of inflaming unlawful emotions by *looking on* an object of desire. The organ of vision might become an instrument of sin. The Hebrews were accustomed to compare lusts and evil passions, and also good affections, with different members of the human body. The bowels, heart, and eye, were thus used. 2 Cor. vi. 12, vii. 3; Mark vii. 21, 22; Rom. vi. 13, vii. 23. — *Offend.* Here is an instance where the meaning of the word has changed during two centuries, so that it does not now express what it did at the time our English version was made. It

Digitized by Google

it out, and cast *it* from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend 30
thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. It hath been said: 31
"Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a

---

then meant to cause to fall, or to sin; it now means to affront. The original clearly signifies to make to stumble, to seduce, to tempt to sin, or to ensnare. If the right eye, or hand, if the best member in the whole body, led its possessor into sin, it were better to lose it than to perish entirely as to the moral nature. It is said that the right eye was indispensable to a soldier, as war was then conducted, and that to lose it would be more than to part with the other. —*Pluck it out.* This cannot be understood with any propriety as an injunction to be literally performed, but as a strong mode of saying that the greatest loss was preferable to the loss of holiness; that any hardship was to be endured rather than that a sinful habit should be tolerated; that the dearest object was to be relinquished, if it was a stumbling-block to our virtue. By self-denial, though it be painful as the plucking out of a right eye, or the cutting off a hand, must the vicious propensities be restrained. The darling inclination, the easily besetting sin, must be renounced, however great the sacrifice. Matt. xviii. 8, 9; Mark ix. 43–47; Rom. viii. 13.

30. The same in substance as the last verse. Reiteration is one of the figures of good speaking and writing. The deeply moved mind overflows with powerful imagery. — *It is profitable*, i. e. it is better, it is preferable. —*One of thy members should perish.* Men with diseased limbs hesitate not to have them amputated in order to save life. They willingly yield up a less good to retain a greater. So, is the reasoning of our Master, should men do in spiritual things. It is better to crucify the most cherished desires, if sinful, than by their indulgence to endanger the salvation of the soul itself, and lose eternal life. — *Hell.* This term, in the original, Gehenna, has already been commented on, verse 22. The main idea here conveyed is that of severe punishment, extreme suffering, and no intimation is given as to its place, or its duration, whatever may be said in other texts in relation to these points. Wickedness is its own hell. A wronged conscience, awakened to remorse, is more terrible than fire or worm. In this life and in the next, sin and woe are for ever coupled together. God has joined them, and man cannot put them asunder.

31. After showing that the laws of his religion included the heart, as well as the outward conduct, and that no sacrifice was too great to be made for virtue, he proceeds to contrast the practices and opinions of the times in relation to divorces, with the strictness of his principle. — *It hath been said.* Deut. xxiv. 1; Jer. iii. 1, 8; Matt. xix. 3–9; Luke xvi. 18; Mark x. 2–12. Moses had given a law in reference to divorcement, but it was designed for the then existing condition of the Jews; it was adapted to the hardness of their hearts. Mark x. 5. Jesus would inculcate a stricter principle. On the interpretation of

Digitized by Google

32 writing of divorcement." But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry 33 her that is divorced committeth adultery. Again, ye have

the Mosaic law respecting divorces, there was a division of opinion among the Jews; one Rabbinical School holding, that a separation might take place for any cause, however slight; another maintaining, that it was justifiable only in the case of unfaithfulness in the marriage relation. Our Lord supports the same principle on grounds of his own, and rebukes those loose notions and practices, common amongst the Jews in relation to this most sacred connexion. — *Writing of divorcement.* This was a bill, or form, stating that at a certain time the writer had, at his own pleasure, divorced and expelled his wife, and that she was at liberty to marry whom she chose. It was subscribed by two witnesses, and given to the woman as her bill of divorce. Frequency of divorces has always been deemed a proof of a very corrupt state of society. It was so in the time of our Saviour. The increased cases and facilities of divorce in our own country, are an omen of bad import.

32. The Saviour restricts the power of divorce to a single case, and that one in which there could be no reasonable hope of domestic peace or confidence. Still his language does not, to all, bear the literal inference, that he allowed of divorce in no other possible case. It has been suggested, "that Christ may have mentioned Adultery, rather as an example of that kind or degree of offence, which amounted to a dissolution of the marriage bond, than as the only instance in which it was proper that it should be dissolved."— *Fornication.* Whoredom. — *Causeth her to commit adultery.* These words are not to be taken literally. The man who dismisses his wife for insufficient reasons does not actually cause her to commit that crime, but is responsible for it, if he subjects her to a situation where she is led to commit it. He is a sharer in the guilt, so far as an unjust divorce has been the cause of it, for that was his act. — *Marry her that is divorced.* That is, her who is divorced for any other reason than the one mentioned above, or causes as weighty as that. He who marries a woman, dismissed from her husband on trivial grounds, is partaker of the guilt of adultery, inasmuch as a new connexion precludes the restoration of harmony, and the resumption of the conjugal ties, that have been needlessly and unjustly severed. The sense of the whole verse, according to a sensible commentator, is, "that, since divorce should never take place except for unfaithfulness, he who dismisses his wife for a less cause, though he should not again be married, exposes her to the danger of an unlawful connexion; and he who marries her under such circumstances, disregards the relation which, morally, if not legally, exists between her and the husband who divorced her for an insufficient reason."

33. From this to the 38th verse, Jesus takes up the subject of Oaths. In order to understand the drift of his instructions, it is necessary for us to go back to that time and people; for whilst he inculcated a universal religion, his form of address was modified and colored by the circumstances of his hearers. What

Digitized by Google

heard that it hath been said by them of old time: "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths." But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by 34

were those circumstances in the present case? The Jews were in the habit, as their learned men inform us, of dividing oaths into two classes, the lighter and the weightier. The lighter were those, which did not contain the name of God, and which, they held, might be broken with impunity, although there was some tacit reference made in them to the Deity. These were frequently made, according to Philo, in common conversation, amounting in fact to what we call profane swearing. An apocryphal writer refers to the custom, Ecclesiasticus xxiii. 9–13. They also allowed of mental prevarication, a swearing with the lips, and disavowing or annulling of the oath with the heart. That our Saviour did not refer to judicial oaths, or to solemn appeals to God upon important occasions in a reverent manner, as some believe, and prohibit them entirely, is apparent from the specimens he cites, which are unlike any that were ever used in any court of law; and from his own example in answering to an oath, Matt. xxvi. 64, when he did not answer to an ordinary interrogation, and from that of his Apostle Paul in calling God to witness, which is in spirit an oath, Rom. i. 9; Gal. i. 20; 1 Thess. ii. 5; 2 Cor. i. 18, 23. He aims to sweep away the minute and pernicious distinctions introduced into promissory oaths and bonds, and to inculcate greater simplicity and sincerity of conversation. — *By them of old time.* Rather, according to Griesbach, *to* them of old time. — *Thou shalt not forswear thyself.* Lev. xix. 12; Num. xxx. 2; Deut. xxiii. 23. Thou shalt not perjure thyself; thou shalt not take an oath in form, and do it with a mental reservation, so as to deceive the other party, and be guilty of trifling with the venerable majesty of God. — *But perform unto the Lord thine oaths.* Deal honestly in the matter. Be true to the obligation assumed in making the oath. So much for what Moses taught. What does Jesus teach in commenting on this law in reference to the circumstances of his day?

34. *But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven.* That is to say, abolish this practice; abandon the common irreverent oaths, in which there is a tacit understanding and purpose to deceive. The sense is more clearly brought out by Griesbach, who leaves out the usual semicolon, and puts in only a comma. For, as the punctuation was determined, not by the original inspired writers, but by their fallible successors in the church, it is lawful to change it as the sense seems to require. Our Lord is not made to say, *swear not at all*, which would be plainly one sense; but *swear not at all by heaven*, and the other pernicious forms which he mentions, which is plainly quite a different sense. If it had been his object to prohibit oaths altogether, upon every occasion, he would certainly have said, *swear not at all, swear not by God*, — and said no more; but, as he goes on to specify what they were not to swear by, he leaves it plainly to be inferred, that there is at least one oath, that by God himself, that established in the Mosaic code, which it is lawful to take upon solemn and important occasions. If a legislator prohibits the importation of certain articles of commerce, we conclude that the ar-

Digitized by Google

35 heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his foot-
stool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King;
36 neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not
37 make one hair white or black. But let your communication
be: Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these

---

ticles which he does not specify in the prohibition may be lawfully imported. — *For it is God's throne.* Is. lxvi. 1; Acts vii. 49; Jesus shows, Matt. xxiii. 22, that in swearing by heaven there is a secret appeal to the Being who dwelleth therein, and that in a trivial matter such an oath should not be used, for it is profaneness; especially should not be used as if a mental reservation could be made, and the performance of the oath could be innocently trifled with, for that would be perjury. To call heaven God's throne, and the earth his footstool, is to use figures in accommodation to man's imperfect idea of the all-surrounding Deity. The Hebrew Scriptures abound in similar instances.

35. He who swears by the earth makes a solemn and binding oath, and is responsible for its fulfilment, for he virtually appeals to Him before whose infinite greatness the mighty globe itself is but a footstool. And he who swears by Jerusalem calls Him to witness whose city Jerusalem peculiarly is, as the capital of his chosen people, and the place of his worship. The ancient Arabs called God simply "the King." The Jews often addressed him with this title. Ps. xcv. 3; Is. xli. 21.

36. The oaths enumerated by Jesus were common amongst the Heathen likewise, as well as among the Jews. Juvenal, Horace, Virgil, Ovid, Martial, and Pliny, to mention no more, might be cited in illustration of the custom. As God is the architect of the head, and it is wholly in his hands, so that the very color of the hair is determined by his will exclusively, it follows that in swearing by the head reference is made to the Deity, and the oath is therefore weighty and not to be used on every insignificant occasion; and binding and not to be broken with impunity.

37. *Your communication.* According to Robinson, in his Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, *your answer, your reply.* When in common conversation you make a reply, do not try to confirm your assertion with an oath, as if that would add any weight to it, but let your yes be yes, and your no be no. Let your simple affirmation or negation be sufficient. Do not expose yourself to profaneness and perjury. — *For whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.* Or, the evil one. If you go beyond this simplicity of speech, you fall into evil. It was a proverb among the Jews, to characterize a man of veracity, that his yes was yes, and his no, no. 2 Cor. i. 17, 18, 19; James v. 12. In conclusion, upon this paragraph relating to oaths, we are to bear in mind, that profaneness and perjury were rife in the days of Christ, and that he addresses his remarks to uproot both these sins. Again, that his prohibition relates to promissory oaths and vows, and not to oaths before a magistrate, or in a court of law. Further, that it is undeniably true, that the authorized oaths of office, of courts, &c., are multiplied so as to lose much of their weight, and often administered so as to command little respect.

Digitized by Google

cometh of evil. Ye have heard that it hath been said: "An 38
eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But I say unto you, 39
that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy
right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any man will 40

And it is to be feared that perjury is more common than is supposed. But abuse is no valid argument against use. Still it was the object of our Saviour to prepare the way for an age when the simple yea or nay of his followers should be more trustworthy than the most tremendous oath. Finally, the lessons of our Master are highly pertinent to the present times. They piercingly rebuke that vice of profane language, which preëminently strikes at the majesty of God, and soils in the common mind the holiness of his name.

38. Our Master criticizes another saying of old, relating to what is called Lex Talionis, or the law of revenge, retaliation. — *An eye for an eye, &c.* Ex. xxi. 23 - 25; Lev. xxiv. 19, 20; Deut. xix. 21. This provision of the Mosaic code was adapted to a semi-barbarous state of society, and, like that relating to divorces, was tolerated and allowed for a time, as Jesus said, for the hardness of their hearts. The same custom was observed at Athens, Rome, and other ancient cities. According to the laws of Solon the retaliation was so rigid that where an eye was put out, and it was the only one the person had, both of the eyes of the offender were put out to make the loss equal. The evil of the law was that it encouraged a fiendish spirit of revenge, fatal to every sentiment of benevolence and piety, which was not content always with returning like evil for evil, but often carried its retaliation to the utmost extremity. Moses, in order to provide a safety-valve for the boiling passions of a half savage people, permitted them *by law* to demand an eye for an eye, &c. But in process of time, it became the custom, under the sanction of corrupt teachers, to make these exactions and take revenge *privately*. Jesus annuls this whole custom, and inculcates a better spirit.

39 - 48. Parallel passage, Luke vi. 27 - 36.

39. *Resist not evil.* Or, the injurious person. The nature and condition of man, the example of Jesus and his disciples, forbid the idea that the principle of non-resistance, in the wide latitude which some give it, was ever designed to be conveyed in these words. Resisting evil is man's great work on earth; resisting evil men, overcoming evil with good, is the mission of every Christian. The manner of resistance is the great question. The lesson of Jesus plainly was, that we should not oppose the evil or injurious person in his own spirit, should not resist in anger, revenge, or hate; should not resist for the sake of doing harm, but of preventing harm; should resist in such a self-possessed temper as to be able to bear even redoubled indignities, and to prefer to suffer them rather than to give way to the angry passions. — *Smite thee on thy right cheek, &c.* An affront of the worst kind. Is. l. 6; Lam. iii. 30. Nobody can suppose for a moment that this is to be literally understood. It is a hyperbole. As much as to say, it is better to turn the other cheek to the smiter than to retaliate in his own hot spirit. Meek and patient endurance is preferable to eager, headlong revenge. It is observable in this connexion,

Digitized by Google

sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy*
41 cloak also; and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go
42 with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee; and from him
43 that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard

that Jesus expostulated with the band who arrested him, and the officer who struck him. Mark xiv. 48; John xviii. 22, 23. In these, as well as in other cases, it is not so much the object of our divine Master to give his followers a statute book, to define nicely their doings, but to carry home deeply and feelingly to their hearts and consciences great principles, that should be an ever present and ever speaking law to them. — It has been said, that it is devil-like to return evil for good, beast-like to return evil for evil, man-like to return good for good, but God-like to return good for evil.

40. The first case he cites is of assault, the second is of a suit at law, and the third is that of personal liberty. Here again the like principle of interpretation is to be applied as in the preceding verse. It is an illustration, rather than a rule, which Jesus here propounds. Loss of property is better than litigation. I can afford to lose dollars and cents; but love for our neighbor is one of the "*must haves*," it is of the necessity of life itself. Submit to any inconvenience, even that of losing an article of clothing, rather than be embroiled in quarrels and contentions in law with a violent man. — *Coat*. The coat or tunic was the under or inner garment, encircling the whole body and descending to the knees. The cloak was a flowing mantle without sleeves, nearly square, worn over the close under-dress, and often used as a covering at night. Hence the custom and expression, to gird up the loins, or confine this loose dress around the person. There is a reference in the verse probably to the law of Moses. Ex. xxii. 25, 26; Deut. xxiv. 13.

41. *Whosoever shall compel*. This language is taken from a Persian custom. A courier travelling on the king's business could lawfully impress into his service, men, horses, ships, boats, or any vehicle, to accelerate his journey. No person could refuse with safety, however urgent his own business or journey. The king's will was omnipotent. The same custom prevailed under the Roman governors or Tetrarchs, and, according to Chardin, prevails now among the Turks. A compulsory service is spoken of in Matt. xxvii. 32; Mark xv. 21. — *Twain*. Two. The sense is an amplification of the last verse. It is better to do twice as much as is required of us than to seek revenge, or to make an opposition which would only draw upon our heads greater ruin. Or apply it to the time: those thus pressed into the public service would feel angry and bitter; but Jesus advises that they should be willing to do more rather than less than they were compelled.

42. Here are farther pointings towards the same kind, conciliating, accommodating, fraternal spirit. We are not to understand that we are to give to every one that asks, or to lend to every one that wishes to borrow. To give to some would be to furnish them with the means of injury; to lend to some would be to supply them encouragements to indolence and shiftlessness. Still "turn not thou away" from the really needy, help them in the most judicious way. James ii. 15, 16. Most noble were the injunctions of

Digitized by Google

that it hath been said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy." But I say unto you, love your enemies, 44 bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and

the Mosaic law on this head. Deut. xv. 7 – 11. Reject not the suit of the poor, or those who solicit your aid, though, as the connexion indicates, they have treated you in such a way as seemingly to release you from the obligations of benevolence. Luke vi. 30 – 35. Rom. xii. 20. Give and lend to enemies.

43. After using some minute illustrations of the true principles of morals and religion, and contrasting them with current doctrines, he proceeds from this verse to enjoin love towards enemies. — *It hath been said.* Said by whom? By ancient teachers and rabbins. There is no commandment in the Old Testament that we should hate our enemies. But the Jewish teachers corrupted the law, and deduced illegitimate inferences, at variance with its spirit; particularly from Lev. xix. 18. One of them said, that "he who lived in idolatry was the common enemy of all, and as such might be slain by any one." And Tacitus, a Roman historian, says, "the Jews hated all others as enemies." The language of Paul is that they were "contrary to all men." Other citations might be made to the same effect. "A Jew sees a Gentile fall into the sea: let him by no means lift him out: for it is written: Thou shalt not rise up against the blood of thy neighbor; but this is not thy neighbor." The Mosaic law inculcated, however, mercy to enemies. Ex. xxii. 21. Deut. xxiii. 7.

44. Similar language is found in Luke vi. 27, 28; Rom. xii. 14 – 21; 1 Peter iii. 9. And instances of obedience to this divine principle are related in Luke xxiii. 34; Acts vii. 60; 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. — *Love your enemies.* Though we cannot love a bad man's deeds, nor refrain from speaking of them with indignation, especially if they injure us, yet we can love him, if we will only consider that he is our brother man, notwithstanding his wickedness, and can yet be restored to virtue and love, perhaps in some measure by the instrumentality of our own love to him. If we should sincerely love our enemies, how many of them would soon be enrolled among our friends! That this love should be like that of cordial attachment to near relatives and dear friends is not required: but we are to cherish a benevolent regard, a love for them, if not for their conduct; a disposition to do them good at all times, and not evil; to rejoice in their happiness, and not to be envious of it; to lament their calamities, and not to exult over their fall. If we cannot have the love of approbation, we can have the love of benevolence. But this precept runs counter to our general feelings, it requires strenuous self-denial to obey it. It has been remarked, that "this one precept is a sufficient proof of the holiness of the Gospel, and the truth of the Christian religion. Every false religion flatters man, and accommodates itself to his pride and passions. None but God could have imposed a yoke so contrary to self-love." — *Bless them that curse you.* He shows how love to enemies is to be manifested. It is not to be a barren sentiment, but to produce the fruits of forbearance, good-will, and forgiveness. What is meant by blessing is defined by its being contrasted with cursing. As the one is to speak and imprecate evil upon a person, the other

Digitized by Google

pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;
45 that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good,
46 and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye

is to speak and wish good for him, to give him good words. — *Do good to them that hate you.* Here the emphasis is on the word *do*. An Apostle has said, we must "not love in tongue, but in deed and truth." The sentiment of goodwill, if shut up in the heart, and not manifested and exercised in benevolent action, will soon droop and wither, like an unused limb of the body. The affections of the soul, like the muscles of the arm or leg, are strengthened by action. — *Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.* These words originally referred to arraigning and prosecuting at law, but afterwards became more unlimited in their significations, embracing acts of insult and injury of any kind. The precept to *pray* for our enemies shows how truly and profoundly our Master understood human wants and woes, and how completely he could remedy them. If it were universally the custom to pray for our enemies, and to treat them in accordance with our prayers, hatred and unkindness would be thawed and softened, as snow by the sunbeams. The savage feuds, the fostered grudges, the evil eye, the poisoned tongue, by which society is embroiled and rent, would be known only in tradition. Murders, Duels, and Wars, would belong only to the dark and bloody Past.

45. *That ye may be the children of your Father, &c.* It is a Scripture idiom to call those who resemble any being his children. Thus, bad men are called the sons of Belial and Satan; and good men the sons and children of God. John viii. 44; 1 John iii. 10. The force is therefore, that you may become assimilated in disposition and conduct to the benevolent and impartial Deity. Goodness in men likens them to the Being of all goodness. — *For he maketh his sun to rise, &c.* The article before evil and good, just and unjust, is not in the original, and the passage would read better without it. He maketh his sun to rise on evil and good, and sendeth rain on just and unjust. He does good to foe and friend, exercising a most generous benevolence towards all mankind. "We are bound to love our enemies; this is a law of Christianity, original and peculiar. No system but this has required it; and no act of Christian piety is more difficult. None shows more the power of the grace of God; none is more ornamental to the character; none more like God; and none furnishes better evidence of piety. He that can meet a man kindly who is seeking his hurt, who can speak well of one that is perpetually slandering and cursing him; that can pray for a man that abuses, injures, and wounds him, is in the way to life. This is Religion, beautiful as its native skies; pure like its Source; kind like its Author; fresh like the dews of the morning; clear and diffusive like the beams of the rising sun; and holy like the feelings and words that come from the bosom of the Son of God. He that can do this need not doubt that he is a Christian. He has caught the very spirit of the Saviour, and he *must* inherit eternal life." — *Barnes.*

46. *For if ye love them which love you*, i. e. if you love *only* those who love you; if you do not extend

Digitized by Google

love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? and if ye salute your brethren only, 47 what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?

your affections beyond the circle of your friends; if you have no disinterested love. — *What reward have ye?* Luke vi. 34, "what thank have ye?" What virtue, merit, or praise is it in you, and what reward or approbation can you hope for, either from your conscience, or God? Your love is only selfish and contracted. The worst men do as much as you. — *Do not even the publicans the same?* Or, tax-gatherers the same? There were taxes and customs levied by the Roman government upon the nations under their subjection. Two classes of persons were engaged in collecting these revenues. One of these consisted of Roman knights principally, who paid the government a certain sum for the privilege of collecting the money in a prescribed district. The other class were less honorable, and consisted of those who were employed under the general contractors, as agents, to receive the dues at the gates of cities, in seaports, on highways, and bridges. These are the publicans usually spoken of in the New Testament. They were mostly Gentiles, but sometimes Jews. Engaged in raising the taxes of a foreign power, addicted to rapacity, Luke iii. 12, 13, in their office, and exerting their power to oppress the inhabitants, the collectors, or tax-gatherers, were objects of universal odium and detestation. No epithet was too bad to apply to them. Publican was a synonyme for sinner. Luke vi. 32. Their bad qualities of course were likely to be nourished and strengthened by the harsh and bitter treatment which they received from the rest of the community. Theocritus, an ancient writer, being asked which of the wild beasts were most cruel, answered: "Bears and lions, in the mountains; and tax-gatherers and calumniators, in cities." Still, like every other class of worthless men, excellent characters were found among them. Jesus numbered among his illustrious Twelve, Matthew the publican. And Zaccheus was one, though perhaps belonging to the superior class. In saying, therefore, that, in loving those who loved them, they did no more than publicans, Jesus virtually said, they did no more than the most abandoned and hateful persons in society.

47. *Salute.* The species is put for the genus, or, to speak less technically, one act is mentioned as a representative of all the offices of good-will. The salutations of the east vary according to the rank of the person addressed. Inferiors kiss the hand, feet, knees, or garments of their superiors, or prostrate themselves upon the ground. Equals lay their right hand upon their bosom and incline their bodies a little to equals. Various expressions were used also in saluting: — as, Peace be to thee; Be thou blessed of Jehovah; May Jehovah be with you. Similar forms are still observed in the east, according to modern travellers. — *Brethren.* Many manuscripts read *friends.* The Jews were accustomed to treat other nations scornfully, and to restrict their friendly offices to a narrow circle of their own friends or sect. Jesus inculcates universal charity and courtesy. — *What do ye more than others?* What act of singular virtue or distinction is it, to salute, or treat politely, only those who make the same return? Worse

Digitized by Google

48 **Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.**

CHAPTER VI.

The Sermon on the Mount, — continued.

TAKE heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which 2 is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not

men do as much as that. — *The publicans.* Or, as Griesbach reads, *the Gentiles*, or heathen, salute those that salute them. But the followers of Christ were to aspire after wider sympathies, more diffusive charity and civility.

48. *Perfect.* It is not perfection in general that is here urged, but, as the connexion shows, perfection of charity; completeness, roundness, expansiveness of benevolence. In this virtue, we are not to take imperfect, narrow man as our model, but God, whose benevolent regards extend to the family of man, rich and poor, sinner and saint, bond and free; whose tender mercies are over all his works and creatures. We, like him, though not equally with him, for that would be impossible, are to be impartial in our feelings and conduct towards our race, kind to all, loving all, praying for all, treating all as brethren. What a sublime appeal to the sensibility of man, that he should imitate the glorious Parent of all; that, leaving the contracted spirit of clanship, or nationality, or sectarianism, he should aspire after that grand charity, which like the Providence and Grace of God, encircles in its generous embrace the whole brotherhood of man! So Jesus taught, and so he nobly lived. Precept and practice harmonized perfectly in him.

CHAP. VI.

1. Our Lord had been speaking of the wrong construction put upon many of the Mosaic precepts by the Scribes and Pharisees; and he sets up a much higher and purer standard of virtue than theirs. He now proceeds to show that in their religious acts, as well as opinions, there was a corrupt motive; and that his disciples should act from far better principles. — *Alms.* The original text, according to the judgment of the best editors, reads *righteousness* instead of *alms*. The sense then would be, — Do not your deeds of righteousness, your religious duties, from motives of vanity. This verse is a general text to the remarks which follow in verse 2, upon alms; verse 5, upon prayer; and verse 16, upon fasting. He goes on to specify what religious duties should not be performed for the sake of publicity. — *To be seen of them.* The strength of the prohibition lies in these words. Jesus does not condemn public acts of virtue and benevolence. It would be inconsistent with his own injunction, Matt. v. 16. But he forbids such acts being done for the sake of being seen of men, from a love of ostentation. Such motives vitiate the apparently good deed. A man that ever acts virtuously, so far as we can see, may be influenced by such selfish or ambitious views, as to lose the solid reward of virtue, the favor of God. Thus the Scribes and Pharisees lost the approbation of Jesus and their Creator. Matt. xxiii. 5.

2. *Doest thine alms.* The first specification relates to alms-giving.

Digitized by Google

sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when 3
thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father, 4
which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly. ——

He contrasts the practices of the times with the pure principles of his religion, and unveils the worthlessness of an action, however good seemingly, which is prompted by a desire of the applause of men. — *Do not sound a trumpet before thee.* We have similar phrases at the present day: to blazon; to trumpet; to make a flourish of trumpets. It is not clear that any custom is actually described here, but a figurative expression is used, to teach that we should not make a show of our charities to acquire human praise. Reference is made in general, perhaps, to eastern customs. 2 Kings ix. 13. Stage-players and gladiators were brought into the theatres with sound of trumpets. The Persian dervises, a kind of religious beggars, according to Chardin, carry horns with them, which they blow when any thing is given them, in honor of the donors. A Burman convert, reading the Sermon on the Mount, exclaimed, "How unlike our religion is this! When Burmans make offerings at the pagodas, they make a great noise with drums and musical instruments, that others may see how good they are." — *The hypocrites*, i. e. Scribes and Pharisees. Matt. xxiii. 13, 14, 15, 29. The word in Greek means *actors*. It was the custom among the ancients for actors or stage-players to wear masks. Hence the force of the word in morals and religion. It describes those who act under a mask; who profess to be good, but within are bad; who personate, like stage-actors, an assumed character. It has been well said, that hypocrisy is the tribute which vice pays to virtue. — *In the synagogues and in the streets.* The Scribes and Pharisees took the most public opportunities of doing their religious duties, that they might be noticed and applauded. — *They have their reward.* They obtain the reward they desire; the praise of men; the poor return for their ostentation and hypocrisy. They cannot look for any further reward. The higher recompense of virtue and God's favor cannot be theirs.

3. *Let not thy left hand know, &c.* A proverbial expression. The sense is, Make no exertion to publish your benevolence; on the contrary, let it hardly be known to yourself. The alms-box stood in Jewish synagogues on the *right* hand of the passage into the house; hence the peculiar force and beauty of saying, that the left hand should not know of the alms which the right hand bestowed.

4. *That thine alms may be in secret*, i. e. may be secretly given. These directions refer more to the spirit than to the manner of bestowing charities. Gifts to the destitute are necessarily sometimes public. The rule of our Master is violated only when the motive of beneficence is, to be seen and praised by mankind. It is the disposition of heart that makes the giver's alms acceptable or not, in the presence of the Great Spirit. — *Seeth in secret.* Sees the hidden virtues, the private charities, the unobtrusive benevolence of his children on earth. — *Reward*

Digitized by Google

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites
are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in
the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.
6 Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou,
when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast
shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy
7 Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. But
when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*; for

---

thee openly. If never before, at least in that judgment when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, and the great question will be, what good deeds we have done to the poor, the sick, afflicted, and friendless. Matt. xxv. 34 – 36.

5. *When thou prayest*. The second topic is prayer. He warns his hearers against three errors and sins: verse 5, Hypocrisy; verse 6, Distraction of mind: verse 7, Vain Repetitions. — *Synagogues*. There was no harm in praying in a synagogue. Here is no prohibition against social, public prayer. But praying there to be seen by men, using a public resort for private devotion, was ostentatious and censurable. We learn that such was the practice among the Jews. — *Corners of the streets*. The Scribes and Pharisees had fixed hours of prayer, as the Mahometans have now, and they took care to be in the most conspicuous places at those times, that their devotions might attract notice. In the Jerusalem Talmud is this sentence: "I observed Rabbi Jannai standing and praying in the streets of Trippor, and going four cubits, and then praying the additionary prayer."

6. *Thy closet*. The Jewish houses contained an upper apartment for retirement, a kind of private chapel. In Matt. xxiv. 26, the same word is translated "secret chambers." There were two reasons for this injunction: one, that ostentation might be avoided; the other, that attention of mind might be secured. It is not to be supposed that Jesus forbade public worship, or family devotion, when he thus rebuked the publicity of Jewish prayers. His command is, that private prayer should be in private. He authorized social prayer by his own example, and that of his disciples. John xvii; Acts i. 24, iv. 24. — *Is in secret*. Is present, unseen, in your chamber of devotion. — *Seeth in secret*. A declaration of his spirituality and omniscience. — *Reward thee*. An encouragement to faith and perseverance in devotion. Hundreds of precious assurances like this are scattered throughout the Scriptures.

7. *Use not vain repetitions*. Or, babbling repetitions, or many idle words. This is expressed by one word in Greek, which is derived from Battus, the name of a Lybian king, who stammered; or from the name of a Greek poet, who indulged in tautologies. The sense is, that the worshipper should not needlessly repeat or amplify expressions. This was done to a great extent, by both Jews and Pagans, and carried the idea, that the Deity required to be informed particularly of their wants, and was induced to supply them by reiterated supplications. Such maxims as these were in the Jewish Schools: "Every one that multiplies prayers shall be heard." "The prayer which

Digitized by Google

they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.
Be not ye therefore like unto them; for your Father knoweth 8
what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this 9
manner therefore pray ye: Our Father, which art in heaven,

is long shall not return empty." Their practice was in accordance with these sayings. — *As the heathen do.* As specimens of the vain repetitions of the heathen, see 1 Kings xviii. 26; and Acts xix. 34. — *They shall be heard.* Or, more correctly, shall make themselves heard. — *Their much speaking.* Their error was, that they supposed that the gods were altogether such as themselves; that they must be informed of the necessities of their supplicants, and wearied by importunity until they granted their requests. Our Lord, like Solomon, Ecc. v. 2, says, "Let thy words be few;" and with the Son of Sirach, Ecc. vii. 14, "Make not much babbling when thou prayest." Yet it is *vain* repetitions he especially discountenances. Repetition *may* sometimes express a higher fervor of devotion. Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, 44.

8. *Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of.* Jesus does not by any means mention this as a reason why men should not pray, but as a reason why they should not pray as the heathen did, with long, reiterated, verbose expressions. Prayer is not designed to inform God of any thing; not even of our desires; for they are known to him better than we can express them. But it is communion of spirit with spirit. It is aspiration towards heaven and heavenly things. It is homage, gratitude, confession, supplication from the finite child to the Infinite Father. On this ground it is defensible, and with these views it should be performed. So Christ and his disciples taught and practised.

9–13. For the parallel passage, see Luke xi. 2–4.

The Jewish teachers were accustomed to give their disciples forms of prayer. John the Baptist taught his disciples how to pray. Luke xi. 1. It was natural therefore for the disciples to desire, and for the Saviour to give a model of devotion. This model has usually gone under the name of the Lord's Prayer, because our Lord composed it. The sentences, however, are partly drawn from the public liturgies of the Jews. But the work of selecting, combining, and arranging them exhibits as plainly the wisdom of our Master, as if every word had been original. Here, as upon other occasions, he hesitated not to weave into his instructions the holy sayings, and fitly spoken words, of prophets and priests before him; for they were embalmed in the dearest associations of his auditors. This prayer, rising above the narrowness of Jewish notions, possesses that comprehensiveness and adaptedness becoming a universal religion, and forms an epitome of Christianity. It breathes the spirit of filial faith in God, and fraternal affection for man. It may be viewed as a compend of the leading topics of devotion; suitable in all ages, places, and conditions of the world. Every sentence is a text for a variety of subjects, which might be comprehended under it. From the practice of the disciples, we learn that this form was not given to them or us for exclusive and constant use, but as descriptive of the substance and spirit of true devotion.

9. *After this manner therefore pray ye.* Take this as the pattern of your devotions. — *Our Father.*

Digitized by Google

10 hallowed be thy name ; thy kingdom come ; thy will be done,
11 in earth as *it is* in heaven ; give us this day our daily bread ;

It has been observed that the word *our*, beginning this prayer, beautifully intimates, that in our private supplications love to man and love to God should be inseparable. In the secret chamber we should not forget our social condition. By the endearing appellation of *Father*, the infiniteness and awfulness of the Deity are brought down to a level with our finite minds and timid faith. From Jesus we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we can cry, Abba, Father, before the dread majesty of the Sovereign of the universe. — *Which art in heaven.* Boundless, pure, tranquil, glorious, like the spreading skies above us, is the Being whom we worship. But more than this. He dwells not peculiarly in the material heavens any more than elsewhere. He dwells in the spiritual heaven, of which the sky is but an emblem ; the heaven of spirituality, holiness, love, and mercy. Those who imitate him, as dear children, are entering into the same heaven of blessedness. — *Hallowed be thy name.* May thy name be sanctified, or mayest thou be reverenced. This is the first petition. It is a prayer that idolatry, profaneness, and blasphemy may come to an end, and that the true worship of God may be established throughout the world. 1 Peter iii. 15 ; John iv. 21, 23.

10. *Thy kingdom come.* The kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom or reign of the Messiah, are equivalent terms. This second petition means, therefore, May the reign of truth, the sway of the Christian religion, be extended everywhere ; may Jesus Christ rule as the moral King, the spiritual sovereign of the globe. The Jews were accustomed to say : "He prays not at all in whose prayer there is no mention of the kingdom of God." — *Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.* Better, *on* earth. Religion may have spread the knowledge of God everywhere, and yet his will may not be perfectly obeyed. This is a supplication that the diffusion of truth may be followed by the prevalence of a heavenly obedience to the truth, and to God. In using these words, we pray that men, like angels, may submit their wills to the will of God ; obey his laws ; and yield, and yield cheerfully, to the wholesome chastenings of his Providence. "This comprehensive petition is the most humble, as well as the most prudent, that can be offered up from the creature to the Creator ; as it supposes the Supreme Being will do nothing but what is for our good, and that he knows better than we ourselves what is so."

11. *Give us this day our daily bread.* The first three petitions are for the world ; that the true worship of God, the knowledge of his will, and obedience to his commands, may be universal. The last three petitions of the Lord's Prayer relate to the temporal and spiritual wants of ourselves. The first is for temporal good, and decides the question, whether it is right to pray for any such blessing. Bread stands here for food, clothing, and whatever we need in the flesh. This prayer reminds us that our daily blessings, as well as the sublime promises of eternity, descend from the Father on high. The prevalent anxiety and worldliness with which men labor for riches and renown are rebuked here ; for only one petition

Digitized by Google

and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors ; and lead 12
us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil ; for thine is 13
the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

relates to temporal favors, and that, to good of the humblest, though most necessary kind, *daily bread;* whilst the other five requests are for spiritual objects. Prov. xxx. 8. — *This day.* Or, according to Luke, xi. 3, day by day. — *Daily.* The original word is not used in the Classics, or the Scriptures, except here and in the parallel place in Luke, and its meaning is therefore doubtful. The most probable sense is either *necessary* or *sufficient.*

12. *Forgive us our debts.* Remit our offences. Faults and transgressions are called debts. The same figure of speech in some particulars prevails in our language. One man is said to *owe* another a favor, or an apology. It is observable here, that our sins are forgiven directly by God, upon the fulfilment of the conditions he has imposed, and that nothing is said, or anticipated, relative to their being forgiven by any intervention of the blood of an innocent being, shed to placate the divine wrath. — *As we forgive our debtors.* This is stated as the condition on which we may trust to be forgiven. Not that repentance and reformation are not necessary for forgiveness, but that a merciful disposition in us qualifies us preëminently for the reception of mercy from God. With what face can a harsh and unforgiving man pray for pardon, when by the very act he becomes, as it were, his own accuser? It becomes us ever to recollect that we stand in the same relation to God as offenders, as those who trespass against us do to us ; nay, rather, that none can have offended against us by any comparison so deeply as we have offended against God, and none can have that need of our mercy that we have of the divine mercy.

13. *Lead us not into temptation.* This is a Hebraism, meaning, suffer us not to fall into trials that will lead us into transgression. The trials of life are the school of virtue. But the spirit of this petition is, that we may not encounter temptations too strong for our virtue ; may not be abandoned, unprotected, to the assaults of evil ; may not run recklessly and needlessly into any occasion of sin. 1 Cor. x. 13. How beautiful and appropriate is such a supplication for those hemmed in on all sides by moral dangers and difficulties, and liable at every moment to overstep the sacred limits of virtue! The sense of our exposed moral situation will render this a hearty, frequent, and earnest petition. — *But deliver us from evil.* Or, the evil one ; as it is customary in the Scriptures to personify evil, and call it a person. This is a prayer that we may be emancipated from sin and its miseries, and that the natural evils of life, sickness, misfortune, bereavement, may redound to our spiritual good. How great a petition! It is that we may attain spotless virtue and perfect happiness. — *For thine is the kingdom, &c.* The *for* implies, that as God is all-powerful and glorious, the King over all, he is able and disposed to grant the foregoing petitions. His power can supply every present and future want. His glory is to do good to his creatures. We can therefore approach him in a glad confidence that he hears and answers our prayers. The word *Amen* signifies *so be it,* being derived from a Hebrew verb, meaning *to be true, faithful.* The people

Digitized by Google

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father
15 will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their tres-
passes, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. ——
16 Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad

are supposed to have responded this word at the close of the prayers of the minister, in the Jewish synagogues. The same custom appears to have prevailed among the early Christians. 1 Cor. xiv. 16. This doxology, or ascription of praise, is not found in Luke xi. 4, appended to the Lord's Prayer. The manuscripts of the best authority do not contain it, and it is not cited by the most ancient ecclesiastical writers. It occurs however in some of the early versions. Griesbach, in his critical edition of the New Testament, decides against its genuineness. The first English version, by William Tyndale, leaves it out; also the French version of Sacy. On the whole, it is probable that it was interpolated from the Jewish or Christian liturgies. But it harmonizes nevertheless with the preceding prayer, and forms an appropriate and sublime conclusion.

14. Christ enforces this truth often and urgently. Matt. xviii. 21 – 35; Mark xi. 25, 26; Luke vii. 40 – 48, xvii. 3, 4. He beautifully exemplified his forgiving disposition to his enemies even on the cross. His disciples breathed the same merciful spirit. Acts vii. 60; Eph. iv. 32; Col. iii. 13. The forgiveness of enemies is one of the surest tests of a Christian character. And those who call themselves Christians might take a valuable lesson even from the followers of Mahomet; that with greater light they should not prove to be of a worse temper. When a brutal man had struck an Arabian philosopher, instead of a blow he received from the good man this melting appeal: "Were I vindictive, I should return outrage for outrage. Were I an informer, I should accuse you to the Calif. But I had rather pray God to grant that in the Day of Judgment I may enter into heaven with you." — *Your heavenly Father will also forgive you.* "We are not, however, to understand hereby that the practice of this or any other single duty can obtain God's favor, where other Christian virtues are neglected: for, though negative precepts are absolute, yet affirmative promises admit of this limitation, 'if no other condition of salvation be wanting.'"

15. To make the injunction more impressive, he states here negatively what he had laid down in the last verse affirmatively. This is a common method in the Bible. Deut. ix. 7; Is. iii. 9, xxxviii. 1; Jer. xxix. 11. We are all sinners against God, needing, and professing to desire forgiveness from him, and dependent on his mercy for pardon. How unsuitable, then, that our fellow-men, who may have done us wrong, and who may be in our power, should find in us an unforgiving spirit! If they implore mercy in vain from us, how can we expect to receive mercy from God?

16. Jesus continues an application of the same principle to Fasting. Reality and sincerity alone could make this external observance of any value in the sight of God. In this passage he neither enjoins nor prohibits fasting, except so far as verse 17 may be viewed as sanctioning the observance. Christ does not refer here, probably, to the regular Jewish fasts, but to those voluntary and frequent ones, in which seekers after a reputation for piety were accustomed to make a show

Digitized by Google

countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and 17 wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto 18 thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. —— Lay not up for your- 19

of their austerities. Some fasted twice a week. Luke xviii. 12. And some even went so far as to do it four days in a week. At these times, besides abstinence from food, they practised austerities upon their bodies, beating and wounding themselves, and disfiguring their faces. Without their customary bathings, perfumes, and anointings, their personal appearance was squalid. Their hair and beards were left uncombed, and the whole garb was unsightly. — *Sad countenance.* Or, according to the derivation of the word, look not sourly, or like a Scythian or Tartar. This morose and gloomy expression was assumed by the hypocritical Pharisees for appearance's sake. — *They disfigure their faces.* They destroyed the natural appearance of their countenances by neglecting their usual dress and cleanliness, and affecting great sorrow and penitence. Such fasting had no reality, and therefore no acceptableness with God. Is. lviii. 5. No severer condemnation is pronounced by Jesus upon any class of sinners than upon hypocrites. They convert the noblest things, even the observances of that religion which they disobey, into instruments of self-aggrandizement. But they have their reward; the miserable reward of supposing they have enjoyed the reputation of that virtue which they do not possess, — when in reality they are understood, most likely, by men, and certainly by God, in their actual character. It has been said that the hypocrite is like the waterman, who looks one way and rows another; the true Christian, like the traveller, has his journey's end in his eye.

17. *Anoint thine head, and wash thy face.* That is, affect nothing, observe your customary habits of dress and ablution. Fast in heart, not in appearance. Orientals daily wash and anoint themselves with fragrant ointments, except at times of grief and humiliation. Deut. xxviii. 40; Ruth iii. 3; 2 Sam. xiv. 2; Dan. x. 3; Mark xiv. 3; Luke vii. 46. This practice is rendered necessary by the warmth of the climate, and the looseness of the attire of the people. Of course the direction of Jesus is not literally applicable now. His aim was not to define the mode of keeping a religious ceremony, but to teach the worth of reality and substance contrasted with Pharisaical hypocrisy.

18. *Openly.* This word, according to Griesbach, is spurious, and should not be admitted into the text. It was probably first placed in the margin by some transcriber, as affording an antithesis to *seeth in secret*, and was afterwards copied into the body of the page.

19. In the following verses to the end of the chapter, lessons of faith in Providence, and freedom from anxiety about life and its circumstances, are beautifully taught. These lessons were highly appropriate to the disciples of that time, to the Apostles, who went forth poor to preach the Gospel. Yet they are good now; they are the salt of that wisdom which is never spoiled by keeping, but which is

Digitized by Google

selves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt,
20 and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for
yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust
doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor
21 steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be

---

fresh through all ages. — *Treasures.* In the east, the most valuable possessions often consisted of the productions of the earth, the precious metals, and numerous suits of clothing; which, as fashions are not there fluctuating as here, retained their full value for years. Gen. xlv. 22; Judges xiv. 12; 2 Kings v. 5. — *Moth.* A small insect which eats and destroys clothing. — *Rust.* Canker, or what consumes either grain or metals. Their gold and silver would rust, their grain be blighted, and their garments moth-eaten. James v. 2, 3. — *Thieves break through.* Or, dig through the walls of a house to commit burglary. This precept is also found in Luke xii. 33, 34, and John vi. 27. It is not to dissuade from industry and frugality, but from absorption in the pursuits of wealth as the chief good. The phrase is a Hebraism, for instances of which see Hos. vi. 6; Matt. ix. 13; Acts v. 4. A positive and negative expression are united to give the idea of preference, not to express an absolute value. So here. The idea is, Do not lay up for yourselves earthly so much as heavenly treasures. Man, made for immortality, made to be a child of heaven, and companion of angels and cherubim, must, to be happy, live to God and eternity; that is his nature, his element. Otherwise he is like a plant, with its branches as well as roots growing into the ground; like a bird, created for the ample scope of heaven, tamely creeping on the earth as a reptile. Let him soar upward.

20. Earthly treasures are perishable, therefore they should hold a subordinate place; heavenly treasures are incorruptible, therefore they should be supremely loved and sought after. Men are anxious to make provision for their old age; how much more should they gather riches for an everlasting future! — *Treasures in heaven.* What are they? Let our Saviour answer. Matt. xix. 21. Let Paul answer. 1 Tim. vi. 17–19. Charity, good works, a pure heart, a finished Christian character, love; these are treasures, above gold or diamonds; richer than East or West; lasting for ever; glorious to behold; happy to possess and enjoy. We may be poor in aught else, but we may all be rich in soul, rich towards God, rich for the life to come. Let us covet, as no miser ever did his yellow dust, that eternal inheritance laid up for the good in the regions of the fairer world.

21. *There will your heart be also.* A profound truth. Everybody has some treasure, something he esteems, desires, and loves; something to which his heart turns, as the needle to the pole. If we have a treasure, and our heart is not with it, it is no treasure to us. A real treasure draws the affections after it. Luke xii. 34. Happy will it be for us when we shall see that virtue, goodness, God, heaven, are such treasures as are worth all our desires, hopes, and efforts. Laying up our treasures in heaven, our hearts will spontaneously be drawn up thither.

Digitized by Google

also. The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine 22
eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if 23
thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If
therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is*
that darkness! No man can serve two masters; for either he 24

---

22. *The light of the body is the eye.* Luke xi. 34. He states a physical fact to illustrate a spiritual truth. The eye is the receptacle, not the producer, of light. But by a visual deception, it seems to make the light; when open, all is light about us; when shut, all is dark, as if night itself were around us. — *Thine eye be single.* Sound, clear. — *Full of light.* The whole body is enlightened when the eye is in a healthy state. It is in an atmosphere of light. Its motions will all be sure and effective.

23. *Be evil.* The same figure continued. If the eye be diseased, distempered, incapable of doing its proper office as an eye, then the whole body, through the failure of so small an organ, is enveloped in impenetrable darkness. Man gropes in uncertainty. He feels after things if he may peradventure find them, but all his movements must be uncertain; his noblest sense is gone, "and wisdom at one entrance quite shut out." — *The light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!* Luke xi. 35, 36. Here is the application. It is one of the sorest ills to have one's eyesight fail; how much more to have the inner light quenched! *In* is the emphatic word. The connexion of verses 22 and 23 with the foregoing subject is now evident. Jesus had been urging the importance of heavenly-mindedness, of laying up imperishable treasures; riches subject to no earthly mischance. But to do this, the soul must be enlightened, the judgment must not be blinded, the mind's eye must not be dimmed by the glare of worldly splendor. If it is diseased, if it see false shapes and appearances, then thoughts, wishes, affections, are shrouded in error and darkness; a darkness how great! a gloom, as of Egypt, that can be felt! When the bodily senses are impaired, the evil is slight compared with the perversion of the powers of the soul. When the inner world is dark, the spark of heaven, the light of God, reason, conscience, are benighted, what a night is there! how much more awful than the natural night, how much worse than total blindness of the eyesight! 2 Cor. iv. 4. Some of the ancient sages used the same comparison, "as the eye in the body, so is the reason in the soul." Jesus speaks of a light *in us;* that would be a positive contradiction in terms, if all was originally totally dark and depraved there. He never taught the doctrine of Total Depravity. He assures us that *the light may become darkness*, reason may be dethroned, and conscience seared, and the heart hardened; but God did not create us in that state. — Having dimmed the lustre of the spirit-eye, we shall pray with Milton: —

> "Thou celestial light,
> Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
> Irradiate; there plant eyes, all mist from thence
> Purge and disperse."

24. The Saviour had spoken of the perishable nature of earthly treasures as one reason why they should not be pursued and laid up as the greatest good; he had alluded to the darkness which over-

Digitized by Google

will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and
25 Mammon. Therefore I say unto you: Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than

---

spreads the covetous, worldly mind, more dreadful than blindness; he now appeals to the principle that man cannot serve two masters at the same time, as a further motive to labor for the heavenly inheritance in obedience to God. Every man has his ruling passion, his prominent object of pursuit. Two objects of different natures he cannot pursue with equal interest, affection, and unweariedness. He may worship and serve and love the Pleasure-god, or the Money-god, but he neglects his Maker. All idolatry did not cease when the wooden and stone images were thrown down. It is to be feared that thousands in Christian lands offer their sincerest service, their heartiest worship to Mammon, or some idol of the heart. — *Hate the one, and love the other.* Which means, according to a common Hebrew idiom, to *love less* and *love more*, not absolute hatred and love. — *Or else.* Or, at least will *hold to*, obey one. — *Despise.* Disobey the other. — *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* This is the inference from the principle advanced. Mammon is a Chaldaic and Syriac word, meaning riches, and is here used as the name of the money-god. If we truly love and serve God, as devoted, dutiful children, we shall postpone all worldly aggrandizement as of inferior consequence. If rich, we shall esteem wealth of less value than religion. If poor, we shall still feel that we may have within our possession the grandest treasure of the universe. But on the other side, if we centre our desires and hopes in things earthly, we shall inevitably defraud our Creator; we cannot live to this world and to heaven also, — give half a heart to God, and half a heart to Mammon. But how many are engaged in the futile attempt to bring about this impossible thing; and distressing their lives with the knotty problem, how they may be worldly and spiritually minded at the same time!

25. *Therefore.* A conclusion from the preceding verse. If one must be your master, let it be the rightful one, your Father in heaven. Vex not yourself with needless fears about temporal prosperity. — *Take no thought.* An unfortunate rendering. Rather, take no undue thought; be not anxious and solicitous, distracted in mind, tossed by cares. Phil. iv. 6. There is no countenance given here to the idle, the improvident, and thriftless. A degree of attention is necessary to secure a livelihood. Rom. xii. 11; 1 Tim. v. 8. But the point is, that we should not be so much concerned about *living*, as to neglect *life*, to distrust Providence, and to forego heaven. Food and clothing are the means, not the ends of life. Several beautiful and pointed illustrations enforce the doctrine through the following verses. — *Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?* This is the first reason for a calm, unanxious reliance on Divine Providence, the past experience of its care. 1 Peter v. 7. If God has bestowed life and bodies, certainly he will not fail in providing the less gifts

Digitized by Google

meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the 26
air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into
barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not
much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can 27
add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for 28

---

of food and clothing. The splendid boon of a human, rational, happy existence is such a proof of his kind regard as to banish the fear of any inferior needed blessing being denied us. The formation of the body, with its wonderful adaptation to the outward world, with its perfect senses, its capacities of labor, endurance, and enjoyment, is such a master-piece of Heaven, as to leave us in no doubt that the requisite garb will be provided to shelter "this little moving temple." — *Meat.* This name was formerly given to all kinds of food. — *Raiment.* Old English for clothing. Luke xii. 22, 23.

26. *Behold the fowls of the air.* Observe the birds. Luke xii. 24; Job xxxviii. 41. The Saviour uses the simple and elegant reasoning of nature, and from the birds, flying around him, draws profoundest truths. It is obviously not his purpose to counsel men to do as the birds, and neither sow nor reap; but to cast themselves on the bosom of Providence without anxiety. If the bird, an irrational, insignificant, transient creature, "poor citizen of the air," sings blithely, without fear of the morrow, or questioning of Providence, shall not man, the lord of this lower world, favorite of the skies, be taken care of? — *Are ye not much better than they?* Of nobler nature, more important station, and sublimer destiny. The poet Bryant has finely paraphrased the sentiment of Jesus, in his address to the Water-fowl: —

"There is a Power, whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast, —
The desert and illimitable air, —
Lone wandering, but not lost.

"Thou 'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

"He who from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright."

27. Luke xii. 25, 26. — *Add one cubit unto his stature.* A cubit is a measure, from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, of 18, or 22 inches. Few would desire to add thus much to their stature. It is more probable that the word here translated *stature* would be better expressed by *age*, as it is actually done in John ix. 21, 23, and Hebrews xi. 11. Though few may wish to be taller, multitudes desire to add to the length of their lives. The argument is then, — If we are so helpless as to be unable to add one cubit to our age, or prolong our life one moment, why should we not perceive our very weakness to be a motive against being "careful and troubled about many things"? The impotence and fruitlessness of all our solicitude, the impossibility of our prolonging our existence one second beyond the allotted period, is a reason why we should confide cheerfully in that tender Providence, which takes no advantage of our weakness, but ministers as the gentlest nurse to our needs. God will do for us better than our fears, better than our hopes.

28. From the fowls of the air he draws the conclusion, that man should not be anxious for the means

Digitized by Google

raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;
29 they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that
even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-
day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much

---

of supporting life. Now from the *lilies* of the field he infers that he should trust Providence for clothing. — *Consider*. Survey attentively. — *The lilies of the field*. Luke xii. 27. Flowers of this kind grew wild in Palestine, and probably multitudes of them were in sight from the hill where Jesus was addressing the crowd. "The white lily is a flower of the field in Persia, and some of its species may be field-flowers in Judea. Besides this, there is the martagon, crown imperial, and other colored lilies." The lily springs up and grows spontaneously, expands its brilliant blossoms, eclipsing the pomp of kings, and fills the air with fragrance. Does God deck with perfect beauty this fragile flower, and make it the glory of the vegetable kingdom, and is he unmindful of his own children, his image, his heirs? — *Toil*, — *spin*. Reference is here made to the employments of males and females respectively. —

"Flowers! When the Saviour's calm, benignant eye
Fell on your gentle beauty, — when from you
That heavenly lesson for all hearts he drew,
Eternal, universal, as the sky, —
Then in the bosom of your purity
A voice he set, as in a temple shrine,
That life's quick travellers ne'er might pass you by
Unwarned of that sweet oracle divine.
And though too oft its low, celestial sound
By the harsh notes of work-day care is drowned,
And the loud steps of vain, unlistening Haste,
Yet, the great ocean hath no tone of power
Mightier to reach the soul, in thought's hushed hour,
Than yours, ye lilies, chosen thus and graced!"

29. *Even Solomon in all his glory*. Solomon was the richest and most magnificent king of Israel, and the reference to him possesses great force and beauty. "If the comparison of our Saviour be to the whiteness of Solomon's raiment, then, certainly, it never equalled the brilliant whiteness of a lily: — if it be to the resplendence of colors, then the mixture, the relief, the *glow* of colors, in some kinds of lilies, exceeds whatever the manufacturers of stuffs for Solomon's wardrobe could compose." How bold, yet true, the figure that the lily of the field outshone the monarch, arrayed in his imperial robes, in his kingly glory, seated on an ivory throne overlaid with gold! 2 Chron. ix. 17.

30. *Clothe*. The subjunctive ought not to be employed here, for a fact, and not a contingency, is spoken of; the indicative would be the proper mode. — *The grass of the field*. This in the original has a wider sense than what we call grass; including all kinds of plants and herbaceous productions. — *To-day*, — *to-morrow*. Expressive of its extreme frailty; suddenly destroyed; one day in full bloom, the next consumed to ashes. — *Cast into the oven*. On account of the scarcity of wood in the east, it is usual to employ dried grass, or the leaves and stalks of plants for fuel. A traveller tells us, that in Barbary myrtle and rosemary are used to heat ovens. The Jews had various methods of baking their bread: in the ashes on the hearth, upon copper plates, in pans, and stoves. But the common kind of oriental oven, and the one no doubt referred to here, consists of a round hole in

Digitized by Google

more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no 31
thought, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink,
or wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these 32
things do the Gentiles seek;) for your heavenly Father know-
eth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first 33
the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these

---

the ground, with the bottom covered with stones, and heated by fuel cast into it. When the stones are hot enough, the ashes are removed, and the dough is placed on the bottom of the oven, and turned whilst baking. —*O ye of little faith.* Distrustful. Luke xii. 28.

31. Luke xii. 29. The injunction of verse 25 is reiterated. —*Take no thought.* Take no undue thought, be not over anxious and troubled about food, or drink, or clothing.

32. *For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.* This sentence is not parenthetical, as represented in our Bibles, but composes a regular part of our Lord's reasoning. It constitutes the fifth argument why we should repose implicit and child-like confidence in the providence of Heaven. Luke xii. 30; Matt. v. 47. This kind of reasoning was often made use of in the Old Testament, as if to shame the Jews into virtue, by comparing them with their heathen neighbors. Jesus says it is heathenish, it is what Pagans, ignorant of God, his providence, and a future state, do, to be chiefly solicitous to secure earthly goods and pleasures, and to tremble for the future as if they were to become orphans in the world. We need not be surprised that they should be distracted and anxious, lest their wants should not be met. But how unbecoming in those enlightened with a true knowledge of the love and care of the Father, to doubt and question his providence towards man! —*Seek.* To seek earnestly, to strive after intensely, is the force of the Greek word. —*For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.* Another motive to banish all slavish solicitude about the circumstances of life. The argument is from God's knowledge to his goodness. He knows our wants, therefore he will supply them. He who gave life knows how carefully its fitful taper must be guarded to prevent its being extinguished. He who created the frail body knows its need of constant reinforcements to its strength, and shelter and clothing to its tenderness. The vital air, the pure water, the comfortable fire, the warm garment, the cheerful light, the wholesome food, the quiet home, the welcome sleep, the grateful rotation of the seasons, — and all the thousand glorious and wonderful ministrations of Nature, testify that our Great Friend, conscious of our necessities, is most kind and liberal in supplying them. —

"O, mighty love! Man is one world, and hath
Another to attend him."

33. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.* Luke xii. 31. The kingdom of God is spiritual blessings; the influences of Christianity; the promises of heaven. —*His righteousness* means the righteousness he enjoins and requires. Micah vi. 5–8. Put religion forward, as the high, brilliant, blissful aim of your being. Call that primary, and every thing else secondary. Other things are good; this is an essential good; it is our life. —*And all these things shall be*

Digitized by Google

34 things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

added unto you. Another reason for a serene reliance upon the care of Heaven. Let religion be the first thing in our affections, and in our labors, and Providence will be our mighty partner and helper in business. As an addition to this verse, the following words are quoted by early Christian authors: "Ask great things, and little things shall be added unto you; ask heavenly things, and earthly things shall be added unto you." All the vices are expensive and losing, as all the virtues are gainful and thrifty. Other things equal, the good man prospers better in worldly affairs than the bad man. Shrewd calculators never miss it more than when they live and labor for temporal good alone. They overshoot their mark. Seeking the world solely, they lose both the world and heaven. In cases without number, their unrighteous policy overleaps itself, and crushes to atoms their false and godless hopes. Virtue first, Virtue last, Virtue midst, should be the motto of every human creature; and then all other needful inferior goods will be ours. Said David: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

34. *Take therefore no thought.* This injunction has been thrice repeated, showing its importance; and each time has been reinforced by some fresh and cogent argument, though without the formality and ceremony of reasoning. — *The morrow.* The future. — *Shall take thought for the things of itself.* Will bring its own cares and anxieties along with it, and the needed strength to meet them. This is the summing up of the whole. Do your present duties, unanxious about futurity. With wants and trials coming to beset you, there will also spring up a present help in every time of need. — *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* Still another reason why we should not harass ourselves with imaginary troubles. Every day has its appropriate load of care, and it is injustice to borrow from the morrow to increase that load. We always have evils enough without anticipating any. Do not sorrows come thickly and quickly enough without conjuring them up from "the vasty deep" of the unknown Future? Let none but the Divine Hand draw that curtain which hangs before us.

Consider the numerous, beautiful, and convincing reasons why we should rely calmly on Providence. "The irreconcilable nature of worldly solicitude and Christian piety; the past goodness of God; the care which he takes of the lower animals; the beauty with which he clothes the spontaneous productions of nature; the unprofitableness and impiety of anxiety; the infinite perfections and paternal character of the Supreme Being; the gain of godliness in this world; and the sufficiency of present evils without adding to their number by anticipation." "If we know these things, happy are we if we do them."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

The Sermon on the Mount, — continued.

JUDGE not, that ye be not judged. For with what judg- 2
ment ye judge ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye
mete it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest 3
thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not
the beam that is in thine own eye? or how wilt thou say to thy 4

CHAP. VII.

1. Parallel with this chapter is Luke vi. 37 – 49.

A variety of different topics are handled, more or less connected; yet "none of the expressions are to be interpreted too literally. But their effect on the mind is greater than that of any literal expression. By his figurative mode of speaking Christ shows in the clearest manner what dispositions we should cultivate, and this tendency once communicated leads to all right conduct, without particular directions." — *Judge not.* Condemn not. The above rule applies here. Jesus is not to be taken literally in this declaration. He did not prohibit judicial sentences, or the making up and expressing of opinions in relation to the conduct and character of our fellow-men, within proper limitations. But the passing of rash and rigorous judgments, and indulging in a censorious, malicious temper, met his condemnation. He suggests, as a motive to check them, that such dispositions expose one to similar treatment from others. Rom. ii. 1, xiv. 4; James iv. 11, ii. 13. Allusion is made probably to the censoriousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, which was abundantly exhibited towards Jesus himself, and towards his followers.

2. It is difficult to maintain charity, kindness, and toleration towards our fellows; as the strongest motive therefore to such virtues, our treatment of others is made the gauge of others' treatment of us; and this principle reaches even to the bar of heaven, according to Jesus. Matt. vi. 14, 15, v. 7. — *With what judgment, &c.* This was a Jewish proverb. Jesus quoted many such expressions in common use, in order to avail himself of every proper means to make his views intelligible, and stamp them upon the hearts of his auditors. — *Mete.* Measure. It is a philosophical fact, that like dispositions produce like; kindness begets kindness; cruelty provokes cruelty. Others are generally to us what we are to them. Mark iv. 24.

3. *Beholdest.* Pointest out censoriously. — *Mote.* Any minute particle of matter. As the comparison is here made between this and a beam or a log of wood, — by a strong figure of speech, — it would be better to translate mote, splinter or sliver. This saying is also found in various forms in the rabbinical writings. Uncharitableness detects the foibles of others, and passes by its own vices. But love forgets others' offences, whilst intent upon its own, and exclaims with Paul, "I am the chief of sinners."

4. *How.* With what face, or with what propriety, can you criticize and condemn an offending brother, when you are yourself guilty of things far worse? In this and the last verse a second reason is advanced, why we should not judge

Digitized by Google

brother: Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, be-
5 hold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast
out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see
clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. ——
6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your
pearls before swine; lest they trample them under their feet,
7 and turn again and rend you.——Ask, and it shall be given you;
seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

---

others: viz., our inability to do it justly on account of our own sins. — *Brother*. Jesus and his Apostles call mankind by this endearing appellation. In the eye of the Gospel, mankind compose one vast brotherhood, and family of God.

5. *Hypocrite*. Uncharitable, uncandid man. One who overlooks his own larger sins, in searching out his neighbor's smaller ones, is guilty of a species of hypocrisy. If we first clear our own moral vision of its mists and impurities, we shall then see our brother's character in a truer light, be more charitable to him, and more competent to show him the way of penitence, reformation and spiritual life.

6. *Holy*. That which was offered in sacrifice to God. — *Dogs* — *swine*. These were unclean animals according to the law of Moses. To call a man a dog was, and is, among oriental nations, one of the strongest epithets of contempt. The Jews applied it to the Gentiles; the Turks apply it to Christians. These words are here used as descriptive of two classes of men. One is sour, malignant, and abusive; ready not only to reject the teachings of the Gospel, but to rend in pieces the teacher. Phil. iii. 2. The other class is gross, sensual, and corrupt; who trample the truth under their feet with a bestial indifference and disdain. — *Pearls*. A precious substance found in a shell-fish resembling an oyster. They were obtained from the Arabian and Indian seas. The precepts of wisdom are often compared to them. Job xxviii. 18. Similar symbolical sayings are found in Jewish and Classic authors. The connexion of this verse with the preceding is not perfectly clear. Some suppose that a wholly new topic is introduced. But the better view is this: that, as our Master had cautioned them against censorious judgments, he here points out, lest all liberty of forming an opinion of others' conduct might seem to be taken away, another extreme to be avoided; that of dealing with all men indiscriminately. The emphasis is then upon *dogs* and *swine*. Some men are so gross and violent as not to be mistaken. Give not your reproofs, your instructions, promiscuously, else you might fall into the mistake of one who should cast the holy sacrifice before ravenous dogs, and pearls under the feet of swine. The lesson is one therefore respecting a charitable discrimination of character, and an adaptation of instructions to the wants and conditions of mankind.

7. Prayer is necessary to the formation of such a bland, but discriminating spirit as has just been recommended. We must drink at the fountain of Divine Love to imbue ourselves with the same sentiment. *Ask* — *seek* — *knock*. Three different forms to inculcate the same general idea, and make it more emphatic. The successive terms ex-

Digitized by Google

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh 8
findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what 9
man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give
him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 10
If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your 11
children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven
give good things to them that ask him? Therefore all things, 12
whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so

---

press increased earnestness. The idea is, that in our prayers we should be urgent, persevering, and engaged, and then we shall be heard and answered. Luke xi. 5 – 8, xviii. 1 – 8.

8. In temporal affairs, those who wish for any thing ask or seek for it, and, as a general rule, they obtain what they want. So in spiritual concerns, if we pray aright, our requests are granted. But it is of course implied, that we ask in a proper spirit, sincerely, humbly, and devoutly. And, also, that we ask what is consistent with God's will to bestow, and best adapted to our good, on the whole, to receive. The prayer of filial faith and submission, which sums up all by saying, "Not my will, but thine be done," is never breathed in vain.

9. Luke xi. 11 – 13. What force and beauty in this mode of reasoning! It has been observed that the word *man* is emphatic here. Who of you *men?* Who of a fallible race of creatures could treat their offspring with such hard-heartedness as to give a stone for bread? How much less would the Divine Parent be guilty of such unnatural treatment! — *Whom.* Should be *who*, grammatically.

10. Luke, in xi. 12, adds yet another illustration: "Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" Such metaphors were common.

11. *Being evil.* The imperfection of earthly parents is contrasted with the perfection of our Heavenly Father. Parents may be selfish, unfeeling, partial, fickle, or passionate, but God is absolute, unchangeable, wise, and kind. Is. xlix. 15. — *Good gifts.* In the parallel place in Luke xi. 13, the expression is, the Holy Spirit. This is an intimation that the best things we can ask, or God bestow, are spiritual blessings. The Holy Spirit, as used in the New Testament, often signifies miraculous powers and influences. Though these are not shed abroad now, as they were upon Jesus and his Apostles, yet the natural workings of the Holy Spirit of God upon us are a proper subject of prayer. What touching pursuasives our Master addresses to us to be constant and persevering in our devotions — to supplicate for spiritual blessings, and to resign ourselves trustfully into the arms of a Father, so mighty and so good, who, though he denies us the things we ask, will grant us what we really need!

12. Luke vi. 31. He had been alluding to the kindness of parents to their children. But he now says, Let what is right be done to all men. In all circumstances, everywhere, to every person, do as you would reasonably desire to be done by. The sense is, not that our wishes, however unjust, should be the measure of our conduct towards others; but that we should act to

Digitized by Google

13 to them ; for this is the law and the prophets. —— Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the

others as we might properly wish them to conduct towards us. Rightly construed, the precept is of universal obligation and application. It is an abridgment of social duty. The common iron rule is, to do to others as others do to us. But this golden one of our Saviour is more noble, to do to others as we would that others should do to us. It is said to be a rule found extensively in classic and rabbinical writings, Tobit iv. 15: "Do that to no man which thou hatest." And the idea is so consonant to truth and justice that almost all languages contain it. We can better learn our duty in this way, because we see more clearly what is just and right, when we reflect what others owe to us, than by asking what we owe to them. By changing places, our judgments are rectified. It has been well said, "that this law is what the balance wheel is to machinery. It would prevent all irregularity of movement in the moral world, as that does in the steam engine. It would destroy avarice, envy, false conduct, treachery, unkindness, slander, theft, adultery, and murder." — *This is the law and the prophets.* This is not to be cut to the quick, as interpreters say, not to be taken too literally. Similar phrases occur in Rom. xiii. 8 – 10; Gal. v. 14; 1 Tim. i. 5. The same language was used by our Lord, Matt. xxii. 37 – 40. Love to God and man is the substance of law, prophets, and, we may add, Gospel. And where one prevails in its vigor, the other can hardly be wanting; so that, in a free sense, either love to man, or love to God, might be called the fulfilling of the law, and the sum of the prophets. It is related in the Jewish Talmud, that a Pagan came to Hillel, a great Rabbi, and offered to become a proselyte, provided he would teach him the whole law while he stood on one foot. The Rabbi took him at his word, and made him a proselyte by saying, — "Do not to another what is odious to thyself: this is the whole law; the rest is but explanation; go away perfect." "The ten commandments," said Luther, "are the measuring lines of God; they are written in our flesh and blood; the meaning of them is: What thou wouldst have done to thyself, the same thou oughtest also to do to another. God presseth upon that point, and saith: Such measure as thou metest, the same shall be measured to thee again. With this measuring line he hath marked the whole world."

13. This verse is connected with the foregoing rule of social conduct, which is hard of observance to thoughtless, sinful man. The figures of the gate and the road are taken from the ancient cities, some of whose passages and entrances were broad and thronged, and others narrow and unfrequented. The cultivation of a true, disinterested, self-renouncing love, and its constant exercise under all circumstances, is difficult indeed. How few walk in the straight path of love! How many hurry along the broad road of selfishness! The lesson conveyed in general is, that virtue requires choice, care, and effort. — *Enter.* It must be an act of choice and preference. — *Strait gate.* Close, narrow, difficult of entrance. Caution will be demanded to walk in it uprightly. — *Broad is the way.* The temptations to a thoughtless, worldly life are numerous and obvious; widely thrown open are the facilities to vice. — *Leadeth to destruction.*

Digitized by Google

way, that leadeth to destruction; and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the 14
way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it.
——Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's 15
clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall 16
know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns,

But the course is a dangerous one, and will lead to the most fatal consequences. — *Many go in thereat.* Yet, strange and sad to say, it is the very way multitudes are flocking, and it will require resolution not to be borne away into the heedless crowd, yielding to the seduction of their example. But we must not follow a multitude to do evil.

14. *Because strait is the gate.* The reading of Griesbach is,—How strait is the gate! This exclamation more energetically expresses the difficulty of the way of virtue. — *Leadeth unto life.* Conducts to that goodness which is the life and happiness of the soul, in this and all future states of being. — *Find it.* It is said of the broad way, many go in thereat. The right way is something to be found, to be sought after; it does not come of itself. Holiness, piety, benevolence, are not the result of chance, but of choice. The two verses have been paraphrased thus: — "Aim at entering in at the strait gate: though there be a gate that is wide, and the way to it is broad, and many are travelling along it; yet it leads to perdition; therefore take it not. And though there be a gait that is strait, and the way to it narrow, and few are they that travel thereto, yet take it, for it leads to life and eternal happiness."

15. The gate is narrow and difficult; beware therefore of false guides. — *False prophets.* The term *prophet* is used with considerable latitude of signification in the Scriptures, meaning sometimes simply a teacher of religion. That such teachers and false pretenders would arise, Christ and his disciples predicted, Matt. xxiv. 11, 24; and described, Acts xx. 29; Rom. xvi. 18; 2 Peter ii. 1, 3; 1 John iv. 1. If any character of distinguished excellence in any pursuit or art arise, there is usually a school of imitators and sciolists who spring up after him. In this respect religion holds an analogy with other things. — *Sheep's clothing.* In the garb of innocence, and fair appearance; not literally a dress of sheepskins, though some have supposed that reference was made to the dress of the prophets, but in the aspect of goodness and meekness. Heb. xi. 37. — *But inwardly ravening wolves.* A wolf in sheep's clothing is a proverb to express a cruel hypocrite. The teachers here described make fair pretensions, are pure and innocent outwardly, but inwardly are ready to prey upon their victims. In this description, Jesus referred perhaps to the Jewish teachers, who made long prayers, but devoured widows' houses; innocent, pure, and harmless as sheep to all appearance, but in reality full of extortion and excess, rapacious as wolves. 1 Tim. vi. 5.

16. *Know them by their fruits.* Though so deceptive in their appearance, there was one way by which their hypocrisy would be unmasked; their lives would belie their professions. Their fruits, their works, would betray them. It has been said: A man's works are the tongue of his heart, and tell honestly whether he is inwardly corrupt,

Digitized by Google

17 or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth
18 good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A
good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt
19 tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree, that bringeth not forth
20 good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore
21 by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith
unto me: Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;
but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven.
22 Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not

---

or pure. The Saviour takes an illustration from nature. Do men from the poorest plants, as thorns and thistles, obtain the richest fruits, as grapes and figs? So from these counterfeit teachers, meagre souls, wretched hypocrites, the encumbering thorns and thistles of the moral world, we are not to look for those rich, nutritious lessons of wisdom which proceed from one who speaks from the abundance of a deep, good heart. Especially from the tree of barren hypocrisy we cannot expect any fruits of good works, but only the leaves and flowers of good professions and specious pretensions.

17. Matt. xii. 33; Luke vi. 43–45; James iii. 12. — *Good tree.* A tree of a good kind produces fruits like itself. — *Corrupt tree—evil fruit.* But a tree of a bad kind produces fruits of the same sort. The Saviour draws an analogy between the natural and the spiritual world, showing that in each like produces like, good, good, and evil, evil.

18. So it is morally impossible for a bad man to yield the fruits of virtue, or a good man to produce wickedness. Human conduct is determined by the state of the heart, as fruits are by the nature of the tree upon which they grow.

19. John xv. 6. This verse bears so much the character of an intruder and interrupter of the sense, that many have deemed it an interpolation from Matt. iii. 10. But there is no other evidence against its genuineness. It may be regarded as a parenthetical sentence.

20. *By their fruits ye shall know them.* This is the summing up of the illustrations drawn from the natural world. These false teachers would be known by their conduct. By that criterion Jesus permits us to judge of their sincerity.

21. *Not every one*, i. e. no man. — *Lord, Lord.* Or, Master, Master. Luke vi. 46; James i. 22. — *Saith* and *doeth* are emphatic. Mere profession is worthless. Earnest calling upon Jesus, and feigning a dependence and allegiance, not acknowledged in the heart, or expressed in the life, is hypocrisy of the most shallow kind. — *Kingdom of heaven* often stands for the Gospel itself. Persons described above are not Christians, however loud they may be in their pretended devotedness to Jesus. No doubt many came to him, after seeing his wonderful works, professing for him the greatest interest, and readiness to follow him, John vi. 15, who were influenced by hopes of worldly honor and wealth. They said Master, Master, to secure a higher place in his court, not out of submission to his spiritual laws, which alone would entitle them to membership in his kingdom.

22. Luke xiii. 25–27. — *In that day.* At the period of future retri-

Digitized by Google

prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then 23
will I profess unto them: I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity. —— Therefore whosoever heareth these 24
sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain de- 25

bution. *Prophesied in thy name.* Not necessarily predicted future events, but preached in thy name, preached the Gospel. — *In thy name.* By thy power and authority. The Apostles appealed to the authority of Christ, when they performed miracles. Acts xvi. 18. — *Cast out devils.* See note upon Matt. iv. 24. It was a common superstition at that time that the spirits of deceased wicked persons dwelt in some men. They were called, however, demons and not devils, in the present popular meaning of that word. This sort of miracles is specified, because it was more difficult of performance. Matt. xvii. 21. — *Wonderful works.* Miracles, so called because they created wonder and awe in those who beheld them. We learn from the New Testament that some were hypocritical in their profession of Christianity from the beginning, and that miraculous powers were claimed by some who were not worthy of the trust. — Goodness is the only key to unlock the gate of heaven. 1 Cor. xiii. 1–3; Gal. vi. 15.

23. *Will I profess unto them.* Plainly and publicly declare to them. To give greater vivacity and force to the truth, Jesus throws it into the form of a dialogue between himself and these false claimants. — *I never knew you*, i. e. never approved and recognised you as my disciples; for such is the meaning of *know* in some cases. Ps. i. 6; 1 Cor. viii. 3. — *Depart from me, &c.* Ps. vi. 8. The dramatic semblance is continued. — *Work iniquity.* The sense of the original is stronger than to do iniquitously; it is, to make a trade and business of iniquity, as these false teachers did, who converted the holy office of preaching the Gospel into an instrument of selfish aggrandizement. The great end of Christianity, whether in teacher, or taught, is a good life. Nothing short of this, be it faith, or zeal, or profession, or even martyrdom, can meet the purposes of Heaven, or the wants of the soul.

24. We come now to the epilogue and peroration of the Sermon on the Mount, and it harmonizes, in its sustained beauty and energy, with the preceding part, and concludes all in a manner worthy of one who was a teacher from the Father of Lights. Similar figures were used by the Jewish teachers, but inferior in power and elegance. The following is one: "The man who studies much in the law, and maintains good works, is like to a man who built a house, laying stones at the foundation, and building brick upon them; and though many waters come against it, they cannot move it from its place. But the man who studies much in the law, and does not maintain good works, is like a man who, in building his house, put bricks at the foundation, and laid stones upon them, so that even gentle waters shall overflow that house." — *Wise man.* Prudent, considerate man.

25. The beauty of the comparison is enhanced by knowing the reference which is here made to the soil and climate of Judea. The

Digitized by Google

scended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a
26 rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which
27 built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it.
28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings,
29 the people were astonished at his doctrine. For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.

---

land is hilly and rocky, and the heavy rains which fall at periodical seasons wash away the earth. The torrents pour down the hills with irresistible violence, carrying away whatever withstands their fury, sweeping before them buildings that are founded upon a sandy and treacherous basis. The winds also, as is common in warm countries, blow with terrible force; still more endangering what is exposed to the rolling floods. The houses too of the poorer classes are of frail construction, being built of mud walls, or bricks dried in the sun, and reeds, and rushes, which render their overthrow still more probable, in the heavy rains and hurricanes incident to that climate, unless they are very securely built upon a solid foundation. Jesus accordingly spoke to his hearers of what was familiar to them, drawing illustrations from their own observation and experience. — *Fell not; for it was founded upon a rock.* Thus one who has obeyed the instructions of Christ, and built his hopes upon him as the corner stone, will be able to stand, and having done all, and suffered all, still to stand, unshaken by the storms of adversity, calm in death, erect before the throne of God.

26. *Heareth, and doeth them not.* A large class. Many now hear the Gospel, participate in the security, comfort, and outward privileges, which its presence in the world partially communicates to all, have a speculative belief; but not practising the precepts of religion, not bringing their own hearts and lives under its influences, they rest their hopes upon a sandy foundation. The storms of this life, and the trial of the next, will demonstrate their folly.

27. *Great was the fall of it.* The overthrow of the spiritual hopes and prospects of the soul, the fall of man from virtue, is great indeed. The traveller is touched with sadness, as he surveys the ruins of splendid temples and palaces, the relics of ancient grandeur; but what are the desolations of earthly fabrics, and splendid cities, compared with man, the temple of the Deity, broken down and in ruins?

28. *Ended these sayings.* Referring to the whole discourse. — *Astonished at his doctrine.* At his teaching, both in matter and manner. The original expresses more than astonishment. The truths he enforced, the simplicity, directness, and spiritual power with which he delivered them, seized hold of their hearts, so as to strike them with awe. They felt, to their own wonder, a power within them rising up and paying respect to the power of Jesus. Deep responded unto deep.

29. *As having authority, and not*

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

Miracles of Jesus.

WHEN he was come down from the mountain, great multi-

as the scribes. Mention is repeatedly made of the surprise and admiration of the people at his teaching. Matt. xxii. 33; Mark i. 22, xi. 18; Luke iv. 32. Nor can we wonder at it, when we consider, on one side, the capacities and wants of human nature, and, on the other, the qualifications of Jesus to speak to it. Men have more in them than they know of. A soul of unlimited powers hungers and thirsts within them. They love to be caught up into the light and glory of great truths and heavenly principles. Such times are memorable. And notwithstanding the degeneracy of the Jews, the formality and petrifaction into which religion had grown, the hypocrisy of the priests, human nature was stronger than Jewish habits. The common people heard Jesus gladly. For he spoke to them as a divine brother. They perceived that he was unlike their Rabbins and Scribes; for they trifled, wasting their time and strength upon puerile ceremonies and vain controversies. But Jesus was grave, and dwelt upon truths that came home to the business and bosom of every man. The Scribes referred for authority to the ancients. Jesus spoke from an internal authority, and consciousness of the truth of what he said, and of an inspiration and commission from the Deity, that must have clothed his words with a truly celestial power. The wickedness and hypocrisy of many of the Scribes of course undermined all their moral force as teachers of religion. The pure and benevolent spirit of Jesus, his unimpeachable goodness, added a thousand persuasives to his doctrine; and overflowing, as it must naturally have done, in tone, and gesture, and feature, it impressed the people altogether differently from the cant and coldness of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus was humble, accessible, and noble. They were proud, reserved, and mean. Jesus preached the truth of God. They preached themselves. It is not strange that the people were astonished. No such teacher had ever yet appeared, or was ever again to appear. He spoke to the reason, the conscience, and the heart. He was profound, yet plain; powerful, but gentle. The precepts he gave for human conduct; the motives he addressed to the heart; the connexion he pointed out between the character and the life; the authority with which he urged his doctrines; the fearlessness with which he condemned the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees; the beautiful light in which he presented God as a Father, and man as a brother; the views he opened of the purposes of the Creator, and the destiny of man; and the fine illustrations with which he clothed his truths — all bore the fullest evidence to his unrivalled excellence as a spiritual teacher and guide. What further proof can we reasonably demand of his divine mission, or of our personal obligation to obey and follow him as our Master?

CHAP. VIII.

1. *Was come down.* Whilst he was coming down. — *The mountain.* The mountain which he had ascended, Matt. v. 1, and upon which he had delivered the foregoing discourse.

Digitized by Google

2 tudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and
worshipped him, saying: Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make
3 me clean. And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him,

2 – 4. Parallel to Mark i. 40 – 45, and Luke v. 12 – 16.

2. *Leper.* The leprosy is perhaps the most dreadful disease known in the world. There are several different kinds of it, chiefly distinguished by the different appearances it presents. The skin is the principal seat of the disorder, though it extends finally to every part of the system, and even destroys the bones, and causes the limbs to drop off. The first symptom is a small red spot, but in the progress of the disease it covers the body with white scales, and reduces the patient to an offensive and incurable mass of corruption, almost without the form and visage of man. Some kinds of it are highly infectious, and also hereditary. In general it is not accompanied with great pain, but with numbness, or violent itchings. Persons often live for many years who are afflicted with it, carrying about with them a "body of death." It is almost incurable by human means, and the Jews are said to have reckoned the power of healing it among the gifts of their Messiah. It has prevailed chiefly in the hot oriental countries, but was common in Guadaloupe, in the West Indies, in the 18th century. Some have supposed that swine's flesh was prohibited to the Jews, as tending to produce or aggravate this complaint. Mention of the leprosy is frequently made in the Bible, and specific directions are given by Moses to distinguish it, to exclude its victims from the society of others, or to receive them back after a cure, and to cleanse houses and clothes, that they may not communicate the dreadful contagion. Lev. xiii., xiv. In the countries of the east, lepers, to this day, live apart from the rest of the people, and in some towns have a quarter of their own, where they dwell and intermarry. They wear a peculiar badge, to warn others not to approach them. The unhappy leper in question was severely afflicted, Luke v. 12, and was probably living in solitude in the vicinity of the mountain, when Jesus and the multitude passed by. Luke says "in a city," which may mean in the suburbs or territory of a city. The man may have caught at a distance the words of the Messiah; and encouraged by his kindness and power, and inclined to regard him as at least a prophet, if not the Promised One, on account of his fame and the crowds about him, he comes to salute Jesus at some distance, and beseeches his interposition. — *Worshipped him*, i. e. did him obeisance, or prostrated himself before him, as was done to persons of great distinction. — *Lord.* Sir, or Master. — *Thou canst make me clean.* His request is modest and trustful. He doubts not the Saviour's power, he only prays that he may be disposed to exert it to cure him. The leper, according to the laws of Moses, was an unclean person. He therefore naturally speaks of his cure as making him clean, and taking off those social disabilities under which he was suffering.

3. *Touched him.* This act was significant. It implied that there was a connexion between Jesus and the cure of the leper. By the Jewish law, one who touched a leper incurred uncleanness. It was a mark of confidence and a sign of power in Jesus, to touch one infected with this foul disease. — *I*

Digitized by Google

saying: I will, be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him: See thou tell no 4
man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

will, be thou clean. An instance of the sublime, similar to that in Genesis: "Let there be light, and there was light." The loathsome disease retreats before the power of God, exerted by his Son. The Father gives Jesus this control over the worst of maladies. Though he uses the personal pronoun *I*, it is by no means to be supposed that Jesus possessed in himself the power adequate to a cure. It was the gift of God. John v. 30. The same power of working miracles was bestowed upon Moses, the prophets, and apostles. — *And immediately his leprosy was cleansed*, i. e. the leper was cured. The disease is put in the place of the diseased person. The cure being instantaneous was an evidence of a miracle; for when cured by human means, the disorder would go off by degrees, and not at once.

4. *See thou tell no man.* Jesus not only cures him, but seeks to profit him yet further by his advice. Various reasons may have combined in this prohibition. Luther suggests, that he did it from humility. It was designed, perhaps, for the moral benefit of the cured; or to secure to him the advantages of the law, and of being pronounced clean by the priests, which, owing to their opposition to Jesus, they might have been unwilling to do, had they known who wrought the cure. He enjoins it on him to go his way, to proceed directly to Jerusalem, and obtain a certificate of his cure, before it was published who was the author of it. Again, if he had gone forth proclaiming the deeds of Jesus, it would tend to arouse the Jews to declare Jesus king, which they attempted to do repeatedly, and which would excite the jealousy of the Romans, the masters of the country. One or all of these reasons might induce Jesus, upon this and other occasions, to forbid the proclaiming of his miracles by those upon whom they were performed. If the cure of the leprosy was an evidence of Messiahship according to the Jewish belief, there was the more reason at this time for the command of Jesus, as he evidently did not wish to declare himself prematurely, for he would thus have produced such an agitation, both among Jews and Romans, as to arrest his further course of preaching and miracles. Mark, i. 45, relates that the man broke the command of Jesus, who was afterwards obliged on that account to live more retired. — *Priest*, — *gift.* Jesus shows his respect for the foregoing dispensation, though its officers had become degenerate, and verifies his saying, that he came not to destroy the law. How true and beautiful such moderation and dignity of conduct in one so powerful! Reformers may learn a good lesson from their Master. For the health regulations and sacred offerings relative to leprosy, see Lev. xiv. — *Testimony unto them*, i. e. an evidence to the public that the leper was cleansed. If the priests accepted the offering, it was proof to the people that the disorder was expelled.

5–13. Parallel to Luke vii. 1–10. The accounts vary in unimportant particulars, as we might suppose they naturally would, coming from independent witnesses. Slight differences and discrepancies, instead of overthrowing, confirm the fidelity

Digitized by Google

5 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came
6 unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying: Lord, my
servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.
7 8 And Jesus saith unto him: I will come and heal him. The
centurion answered and said: Lord, I am not worthy that thou
shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and

---

of the narrators, and the truth of the facts.

5. *Capernaum.* A town on the Sea of Galilee. See note on chap. iv. 13. — *There came unto him a centurion.* This was a Roman officer who commanded one hundred men. Judea was kept in subjection by troops garrisoned in the principal cities and towns. There was probably a garrison of soldiers at Capernaum, a considerable city on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee. Luke represents the communications from the centurion to Jesus as made through Jewish friends, whilst Matthew introduces the Roman as preferring his request in his own person. As a man is often described as doing a thing which he accomplishes through the agency of another, for example, building a house which he procures done; so we may, without any violence or wresting of language, suppose that Matthew exhibits the centurion as doing himself what he did in reality by means of his friends. Luke is more minute in his narration. He mentions that the centurion was very much attached to his servant, evincing the benevolence of his feelings even to one of inferior rank. He also describes the elders as strengthening their entreaty by mentioning that he was friendly to the Jews, and had built a synagogue for them, thus manifesting his piety to God.

6. *Lord.* Sir, a title of respect to a stranger. — *My servant.* Or, slave. Though in this abject and menial condition, the centurion, following the dictates of a good heart, loves him, and cares for him as for a child. — *Lieth sick of the palsy.* Luke does not name the malady, but says that he was "ready to die." Matthew says he was "grievously tormented." Palsy is not usually attended by excessive pain. But Jahn calls the palsy of the New Testament a disease of very wide import, and supposes that this person had the "cramp, which, in oriental countries, is a fearful malady, subjecting the patient to exquisite sufferings, and inducing death in a few days." In the present case, palsy approximated to apoplexy.

7. *I will come and heal him.* That was his intention, but a change of circumstances rendered it proper to alter it. The strong faith of the centurion made it unnecessary for him to go to the house; for he believed that Jesus could work a miracle at a distance, and thought himself unworthy of receiving him under his own roof.

8. *I am not worthy, &c.* The Jews avoided intercourse with the Gentiles as unclean. Acts x. 28. The Roman felt, therefore, that his house was undeserving of the honor of having a great prophet enter it. He expresses a deep and genuine humility, the fruit, no doubt, of a tender religious sensibility. How refreshing to find a heathen like him, as it were, a native Christian; a piece of human nature retaining its divine image; a Roman religious; a soldier humane; an officer humble! A bright light shining in a dark place! — *Speak the word on-*

Digitized by Google

my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, 9
having soldiers under me; and I say to this *man*: Go, and he
goeth; and to another: Come, and he cometh; and to my
servant: Do this, and he doeth *it*. When Jesus heard *it*, he 10
marvelled, and said to them that followed: Verily I say unto
you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I 11
say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west,
and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in

---

ly. His opinion of Jesus was as exalted as that of himself was lowly. His faith is equal to his modesty. *To speak the word only* is to give merely a verbal command. His penetrating trust saw at a glance, that a miraculous cure could be as easily wrought when the worker was absent as when he was present.

9. This verse may be thus paraphrased, and the sense will be more prominent: "Although I am myself under the command of superior officers, yet, having soldiers under me, I say to one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." The Roman soldiers were under the most rigid discipline. The illustration is a striking and apposite one. It is an argument *from the less to the greater*. As much as to say, If I, who hold a subordinate office, and am subject to the control of others, receive instant obedience from my soldiers and servants, how much more can you, who have supernatural power, cure disorders by a word. You have but to speak, and it is done. The fitness of the comparison evinces the calm, full confidence of the centurion.

10. *Marvelled*. He wondered, he deemed the faith of the centurion remarkable. — *So great faith, no, not in Israel*. The kind of faith here spoken of was a belief in Jesus' power to work miracles, and work them too when away. The centurion had manifested great confidence in Christ's supernatural gifts, believed that he could not only heal his servant, but could do it without entering the house where he was. This was more implicit and larger confidence than any Jew had reposed in him. Among the chosen people, who were most highly favored with religious privileges, he found none so ripe in his confidence as this foreigner and soldier. He might well marvel and wonder that the last should be first, and the first last.

11. This and the following verse are not in Luke's history of the cure of the centurion's servant, but they occur in another connexion, Luke xiii. 28, 29. — *East and west*, i. e. many from all quarters of the globe, from pagan nations, would enter the kingdom of heaven. Is. xlv. 6, lix. 19. Jesus says that the case of the Roman officer would not be a solitary one, but that multitudes of the Gentiles would become members of the assembly of the just made perfect. This remark would serve to soften the prejudices of the Jews against the Gentiles. It was a kindred declaration to that of Peter, in Acts x. 34, 35. — *Sit down*. Or, literally, *recline with*. The oriental posture at table is not like ours, a sitting, but a recumbent one. Those who eat recline on couches. The figure expresses the joys of heaven by a banquet, as

Digitized by Google

12 the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall
be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and
13 gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion: Go
thy way, and as thou hast believed, *so* be it done unto thee.
And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

14 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his
15 wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her

spiritual things are frequently imaged forth by earthly things. Reference may be made to the Jewish aversion to the Gentiles, which went so far as to exclude them from their tables. The Gentiles have been held unworthy of the common courtesies of life, but they will be admitted to the heavenly feast with the patriarchs themselves. Or, to drop the figure, the Gentiles will be admitted to the privileges and blessings of the Messiah's kingdom in this world and the world to come; a kingdom which was thought to be the exclusive possession of the patriarchs and their descendants.

12. *The children of the kingdom.* It is a Hebrew idiom to use the words *sons* and *children* in the sense of title, possession, desire. Thus, the *sons of death* are those doomed to death. The *child of Satan*, a very bad person. The Jews arrogated to themselves the kingdom of the Messiah to the exclusion of the Gentiles, and are called the children of the kingdom. But Jesus reverses the picture; Jews are lost and Gentiles are saved. — *Outer darkness, — weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Ps. cxii. 10. The metaphor is continued. The kingdom of heaven has been compared to a feast. Allusion is now made to the warm, lighted apartments of great splendor, where it is held, by way of contrast to the darkness and wretchedness without, or to gloomy subterranean dungeons into which slaves and prisoners were sometimes cast. Out of the feast chamber all was dark and cold, and those expelled would weep and gnash their teeth from shame and suffering. Some would read, instead of *gnashing, chattering of teeth*, as produced by the cold into which they were driven. These expressions describe the awful calamities which would descend on the Jews, if they rejected the Messiah. Matt. xxi. 43.

13. *As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.* As you believe that I can cure one at a distance, so be it done. The temporal blessing, which a confidence in the power of Jesus' working miracles produced, may remind us of the incalculable value of faith in securing to us things of far higher excellence, the growth and peace and salvation of the soul. — *Was healed in the self-same hour.* Or, at that instant. The cure was immediate and perfect, which proved that it was miraculous. For when persons recover from the palsy by natural means, the cure is gradual. Jesus wrought the miracle at a distance, and upon a stranger; there could then have been no room for any thing but reality and truth.

14 – 17. Parallel to Mark i. 29 – 34; Luke iv. 38 – 41.

14. *Peter's house.* Jesus was now in Capernaum. Mark calls it the house of Simon Peter and Andrew, and speaks of James and John going with them to the house. Bethsaida was the city of Andrew and Peter, according to John i. 44, a place lying on the Sea of Galilee,

Digitized by Google

hand, and the fever left her; and she arose, and ministered unto them. —— When the even was come, they brought unto 16
him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick; that it 17
might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying: "Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses."

Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave 18
commandment to depart unto the other side. And a certain 19

---

south from Capernaum. It is conjectured that this was the house they occasionally resorted to, belonging to Peter's mother-in-law. Or perhaps they had removed thither for the convenience of fishing, after the marriage of Peter.

15. *Arose, and ministered.* Her being able to rise and entertain them was conclusive proof that the cure was complete, and also miraculous, for no natural restoration would have enabled her at once to resume her ordinary employments.

16. *When the even was come.* The heat of the day would have been oppressive to the sick. We learn too from Mark i. 21, that it was the Sabbath day, and the regard of the people for its observance led them to postpone bringing their sick friends until after sundown, Mark i. 32, at which time the Sabbath ended, Lev. xxiii. 32, and the next day began. Luke xiii. 14. — *Devils*, i. e. demons. See note on Matt. iv. 24. — *With his word.* At a word, by the mere force of his command. — *Healed all that were sick.* Which showed that he cured them miraculously, for if he had possessed any thing short of divine power, he would have cured some, and been unable to cure others. "The Redeemer, surrounded by crowds of such unhappy people who were bowed down by their physical sufferings, exhibited, in the healing power by which he relieved their external wants, an image of that spiritual energy which he constantly exercises, through the power of his redemption, upon the hearts of men."

17. Matthew, who was writing for Jews, quotes here from Isaiah liii. 4. This he does by way of *accommodation*. What in the prophet is translated, "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," is cited by Matthew in different words. Noyes translates it thus: —

"But he bore our diseases
And carried our pains."

See 1 Pet. ii. 24, where the passage is understood as relating to Christ's freeing men from their sins, whilst here it is quoted as describing his curing them of their bodily disorders. This shows the latitude with which the Old Testament is cited in the New. By his miraculous power, Jesus Christ bore away the diseases, and carried off the pains of men. By his precepts, promises, example, life, and death and resurrection, he also removes the spiritual infirmities and pains of all who obey him. In the one sense, Peter, and in the other, Matthew, quotes the same passage.

18 – 27. Parallel to Mark iv. 35 – 41; Luke viii. 22, 25, ix. 57 – 62.

18. *The other side.* Jesus was at Capernaum at this time. To go to the other side of the water to the country of the Gergesenes, they

Digitized by Google

scribe came, and said unto him: Master, I will follow thee
20 whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him: The
foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the
21 Son of Man hath not where to lay *his* head. And another of

would cross almost the whole length of the Sea of Galilee, as may be seen by a reference to the map. The occasion of Jesus' going away appears to have been the collecting of great multitudes about him, which might lead to popular disturbances, or at least stir up the jealousy of the Romans. He prudently avoided favoring the worldly hopes, or giving opportunity for the hot passions of the Jews to break out. His vicinity to the sea enabled him to escape those vast crowds which his miracles drew about him, whenever he foresaw a commotion, for few could follow him by water.

19. *Scribe.* The Scribes were expounders of the Jewish law, and were chiefly of the sect of the Pharisees. They were usually arrayed in bitter opposition to Jesus. — *Master.* Rather, Teacher. — *I will follow thee.* Equivalent to saying, I will be your disciple. His offer, if we may judge by the reply of Jesus, was dictated by worldly and ambitious views. It was not a love of Jesus, or a devotion to duty and truth, that prompted him, but far lower considerations. He sees Jesus doing deeds of wonder, teaching with power, and surrounded by admiring crowds. He conjectures or believes him to be the Expected One. He wishes to secure an early title to a high post and preferment in his kingdom, and, spurred on by these selfish motives, he proffers himself as a follower.

20. The reply of Jesus, as in other cases, is directed rather to his ambitious state of mind, than to any peculiarity in what he said. — *Holes.* Lairs, dens, such as wild beasts frequent. — *Nests.* Rather, perches, or roosts, or places of rest and refuge. Jesus assures him that he need expect no honor, or emolument, or worldly advantage from following him. That he was a homeless wanderer, and his disciples must share the same lot, and lead a life of poverty, toil, and persecution. The disciples would be as their Master. We see the severe rectitude and absolute truthfulness of Christ, who would not increase his followers by admitting those who were looking to his service for self-aggrandizement, although he desired disciples. He dealt frankly with all, and flattered the hopes of none. This is not the conduct of an impostor or enthusiast. — *Son of Man.* This term is applied to Jesus about seventy times in the New Testament. In the Evangelists it is used exclusively by himself, with the single exception where a person quotes what Jesus says of himself. He took this title probably from Dan. vii. 13. At the outset, he did not openly call himself the Messiah, even to his disciples. But from the first he used a term which (they would afterwards recollect, though they observed it not at the time,) was employed by him to indicate his claim to that great office. Some suppose it, with considerable probability, to be an emphatic expression, meaning THE MAN. Some call it a title of honor, and others a term of humility. Perhaps not one reason, but various motives combined, led him to adopt it. Doing, as he did, astonishing works, calming the sea, raising the dead, uttering truth, living a perfect life, there was some danger that he would be mistaken, as by many of his followers to this

Digitized by Google

his disciples said unto him: Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him: Follow me, and 22
let the dead bury their dead.

And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed 23

day he has been mistaken, for God. Jesus applies to himself an humble title, "the Son of Man," that would for ever forbid his being deified. "He called himself the Son of Man, to impress upon his hearers that he was an offspring of the human race, and the example of its capability, that he was a brother, a fellow-subject, and the universal model."

21. Another case similar to the last. — *Disciples.* Not the twelve, but those who had listened to his teaching. — *Suffer me first.* Luke states that Jesus had previously said to him, "Follow me." Luke ix. 59. — *Go and bury my father.* This may mean, to go and bury his father who is already dead. Or, taken in a more free sense, it may have this purport, — to go and live with his father until his decease. And the answer of Jesus would, according to the latter interpretation, seem less rough and violent, and more appropriate to the case. This man might hesitate respecting the character and claims of Jesus, and make an evasive answer, so as to leave the opportunity open to join Jesus afterwards, and secure the rank and dignity of a follower in his kingdom, if he proved to be the Messiah.

22. Jesus looks into the heart, and frames his reply to meet his inward wants. He takes up the word *bury*, and from that says, — *Let the dead bury their dead.* This proverbial, and somewhat enigmatical and paradoxical way of speaking, was often used by our Great Teacher. Though obscure at the time, it aroused attention, it impressed the memory. — *Dead.* Is used in a double sense. Those who are heedless of the concerns of the spiritual life are often called in the Bible *dead.* Luke xv. 24; Rom. vi. 13; 1 Tim. v. 6. Classic poets and prose writers use a similar figure. The Jews had a saying, that "the wicked are dead whilst they live." Such is the sense in the case of the first word *dead.* Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. The man makes his filial duty a plea for temporizing, and cloaks his hesitation under that sacred garb. Jesus strips off the disguise, and forcibly rebukes his state of indecision and procrastination. There are enough to bury the dead, and perform the ordinary offices of life, who are indifferent to the soul and eternity. Let them do their work. But thou, who hast a taste and aspiration for something better, "go and preach the kingdom of God." Luke ix. 60. He probably obeyed the admonition. Tradition says, that this disciple was better known afterwards as Philip, one of the twelve. It hardly need be said, that our Saviour was not unmindful of the claims of filial duty. His own life is a beautiful proof of it. Luke ii. 51; John xix. 26, 27. But he would teach that in certain situations it is our duty to forsake the nearest relatives for the cause of the Gospel; that the love of God should be stronger than the ties of kindred or affection, and the call of duty before all other calls. Luke mentions yet a third case, ix. 61, 62.

23. *A ship.* This was a smaller craft than is now called a ship; a fishing boat, or vessel. — *His disciples followed him.* Mark, iv. 36, adds, that "there were also with

Digitized by Google

him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, in-
24 somuch that the ship was covered with the waves; but he was
25 asleep. And his disciples came to *him*, and awoke him, say-
26 ing: Lord, save us, we perish. And he saith unto them: Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great
27 calm. But the men marvelled, saying: What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?

---

him other little ships." They set sail on the Sea of Galilee.

24. *A great tempest.* Mark says, "a great storm of wind." Luke's graphic language is: "There came down a storm of wind on the lake." The Sea of Galilee, surrounded by hills and mountains, is subject, like the lakes of Switzerland, to sudden and violent squalls and tempests. — *Covered with the waves.* The sea dashed over the vessel, and there was danger of its filling and sinking. — *He was asleep.* It was night. Jesus had been engaged during the day in teaching and healing the sick. He was fatigued. His exhausted powers were refreshed by sleep like those of other men. He was not exempt from the necessities of the body, though so great and gifted. He retires to the hinder part of the ship, and lays his head upon a pillow, for the purpose of sleep and rest. Mark iv. 38. The storm comes down from the hills upon the lake, and his followers are affrighted. But he sleeps securely and soundly, having no fears or anxieties to disturb his repose. His slumbers are calm and serene, his sleep that of innocence.

25. *We perish.* We are perishing. In Mark there is a slight vein of reproach: "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" In Luke, earnestness is expressed: "Master, Master, we perish!" What fine and delicate threads of truth we find scattered over every page of the Evangelists! Probably what is recorded by all the writers was said at the time by one and another in their fright.

26. *Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?* O ye distrustful. They had really no cause to fear. Jesus was with them, and they would not be lost. His presence was a pledge of safety. Julius Cæsar, in a boat at sea, sustained the courage of the rowers in a storm, by making himself known to them, and telling them that "they bore Cæsar and his fortunes." How much greater reason had the followers of Christ to hear the roaring of the winds and waves without fear! — *Rebuked.* Ps. civ. 7, 29. His rebuke was: "Peace, be still." Mark iv. 39. — *And there was a great calm.* If the winds had gone down suddenly, and the air had become still, but the waves had continued to roll, as is customary after a storm, it might have been said, as it has been, that there was no miracle, but that the tempest lulled of itself. But Luke says, that the wind and also the raging of the water ceased, and there was a great calm. This proves a miraculous agency; else if the winds had ceased, the waves would still have been violently agitated for a long time, as is usual after a storm.

27. *Marvelled.* Wondered, were astonished. *What manner of man is this?* Or, more simply, to express abrupt surprise, — What a

Digitized by Google

And when he was come to the other side, into the country 28 of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man

man! How great is he! They had not beheld before a miracle wrought upon the elements, and to see the raging tempest stilled to a perfect calm in a moment, by the word of Jesus, might well have overcome them with mingled joy, awe, and wonder. The control which Jesus exercised over the most furious elements is beautifully symbolical of the calm which his religion produces in the restless, fevered heart of man, tossed by passions, fierce in appetite, raging in its desires. We join with Mrs. Hemans: —

"Thou that didst rule the angry hour,
And tame the tempest's mood,
O, send thy spirit forth in power,
O'er our dark souls to brood!

"Thou that didst bow the billows' pride,
Thy mandates to fulfil: —
Speak, speak to passion's raging tide,
Speak, and say — Peace, be still."

28 – 34. Parallel to Mark v. 1 – 20; Luke viii. 26 – 39. The Evangelists vary in this narration, thus unconsciously affording evidence of their truth and independence as witnesses of the same facts, since their differences are capable of being easily reconciled.

28. *The other side*, i. e. of the Sea of Galilee. The opposite side from Capernaum, from which they set sail. — *Country of the Gergesenes.* Mark and Luke write Gadarenes. Both Gergesenes and Gadarenes may have been correct. For as Gadara was the capital of Peræa, and gave its name to the surrounding country, and as there was a considerable city by the name of Gergesa in the vicinity, the region lying on the lake may have been called indiscriminately by the name of the one or the other city. — *There met him two.* Mark and Luke speak of only one. Probably one was better known, or much more dangerous than the other. There is no irreconcilable contradiction, for although Mark and Luke speak of but one, they do not say any thing which absolutely precludes the fact of there being another. When witnesses in court agree in the main story, and differ in some particulars, it is thought to be a corroboration of the facts to which they testify. — *Possessed with devils.* Matt. iv. 24. It should be read, possessed with demons, or those who were demoniacs. These were no doubt insane persons. But the superstition of the times called them bewitched, or demoniacs, or those into whom an evil spirit or spirits had entered. The insane themselves shared in this superstition, and talked as if evil beings dwelt in them, and spoke and acted through their organs. Rosenmüller states that he once saw a melancholy woman, who constantly asserted that she was an unclean spirit. Jesus and his Apostles, whilst they cured these wretched beings, did not undertake to correct errors in philosophy, or reform the popular language. To have attempted it would have diverted them from their great work, and, by dividing, would have weakened and frustrated their efforts, and awakened a needless hostility among the believers in these superstitions. But they spent their efforts on the fundamental truths, which would finally clarify the mind of man of all errors of opinion, the heart of all corruptions of affection, and the life of all vices of conduct. — *Coming out of the tombs.* So says Mark. Luke speaks of his coming out of the city. The tombs

Digitized by Google

29 might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying:
What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art
30 thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there
was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.

were in the immediate neighborhood of the city, and either mode of speech was appropriate. Epiphanius mentions, that there were in the vicinity of Gadara "caves cut out of the rocks, burying-grounds, and tombs." The tombs of the Jews were frequently excavations into rocks, Matt. xxvii. 60, and were sometimes so spacious as to be supported by pillars, and contain several different cells for the dead. They would therefore afford a retreat large enough for the abode of the insane. And Josephus mentions that tombs were sometimes the haunts of robbers. In war the people fled to them for safety. — *Exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.* They were highly dangerous to travellers, and their restoration therefore to reason was a public benefit, though a large number of swine perished, and some persons suffered a pecuniary loss.

29. *What have we to do with thee.* An expression of indignation, or deprecation. Judges xi. 12; 2 Sam. xvi. 10; Ezra iv. 3; John ii. 4. — *Son of God.* See note on Matt. iii. 17. It is a term equivalent to the Messiah. This is a very different expression from one now prevalent, "God, the Son." — The insane had heard of Jesus, no doubt, before, and knew that he cast out spirits. They had perhaps been in those crowds that resorted from this very region of Decapolis to hear him. Matt. iv. 25. For it would seem from Luke viii. 29, that the spirit caught one of them at particular times, and that in the intervals he was sane. His disorder was periodical in its attacks. It was not strange that they should know Jesus, if they had not seen him before, as he was the centre to which all eyes were turned, particularly since he had stilled the tempest. And with that boldness which characterizes insanity, they caught up the popular impression, that Jesus was the Messiah, or a distinguished prophet, and saluted him with a corresponding title of dignity. What they did in this particular was exactly in character for persons deranged. It bears the stamp of insanity on its face. — *To torment us before the time.* Wetstein supposes they referred to being confined in chains, or bled, or to undergoing other medical prescriptions, as they had done previously. See Luke viii. 29; Mark v. 4. They dreaded the harsh remedies that had been applied to them, and feared lest they should be repeated. Others give a different view. The Jews held an opinion, that at the day of judgment evil spirits would be sent to their place of lasting punishment, 2 Peter ii. 4; Jude 6; but that they might be confined or made to suffer before that time by superior beings. Tobit viii. 3. The insane, sharing in the popular superstition, believing that spirits are in them, speak in their name, and deprecate being tormented before the time allotted for their final punishment. Mark and Luke represent Jesus as already having commanded the unclean spirit to come out.

30. *An herd of many swine.* Mark says, "there were about two thousand." A mixed population of Jews and Gentiles inhabited this country. It was contrary to the law of Moses for the Jews to eat swine's flesh, and to that of Hyrcanus to keep

Digitized by Google

So the devils besought him, saying: If thou cast us out, suffer 31 us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them: 32 Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine. And, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

---

them. Yet both laws were broken. Some eat the forbidden flesh. And others raised the animals to sell to their Pagan neighbors.

31. *The devils besought him.* That is, the men who thought they were possessed by demons besought him that the demons might be sent out into the swine. The other Evangelists state that Jesus had inquired of the man his name, and that he replied that it was Legion, for he believed a multitude of spirits had taken up their abode in him. This was a clear trait of a deranged mind. They add further, that the spirits, or the man speaking in the name of the spirits, besought Jesus that he would not send them into the deep, or the abyss, or command them to go out of the country, but permit them to enter the swine. As has been said, this would be a very strange request for a spirit to make, but not at all unsuitable to a madman, who fancied himself to be, or spoke in the name of, unclean spirits, and who, after defiling himself in the eye of the law by dwelling in a tomb, could find no habitation more conformable to his own ideas of himself than the body of the unclean animal here mentioned.

32. Jesus adopts the true method of rendering their cure permanent, by assenting to their wild propositions, and giving them as it were ocular demonstration that the spirits, or, correctly speaking, the insanity, had left them. — *And when they were come out, they went into the herd, &c.* Jesus miraculously transferred the insanity from the men to the swine; which being seized with madness rushed down the steep promontory, and were drowned in the waters of the lake. A cure has been sometimes effected by natural means, by humoring the fantastic whims of the deranged, and acting as if what they think to be real was real. So here. It was indeed a miracle to transfer the madness from the men to the animals; and by complying with their request, and by their seeing as it were the legion of spirits leaving them, and entering into the thousands of swine, which were all destroyed in the sea, Jesus thus secured them against a return of their morbid fancies. For they had, so to say, seen their cure with their own eyes. Otherwise, nothing but a prolonged miracle could probably have prevented their relapsing into their former wretched state. — *Perished in the waters.* It is objected by some to the beneficence of Jesus, that a great amount of property and life was destroyed in this case. True. But circumstances rendered it right and beneficial. All things belong to God, and he and his delegated messengers have a right to dispose of all as he shall deem proper. The destruction of the swine, as we have seen above, subserved the purpose of rendering the cure of the insane permanent. What is any amount of property, or brute life, weighed in the scales with the reason of an immortal man, or the safety and comfort of the neighborhood, and of travellers who were endangered by these madmen? Matt. viii. 28. The miracle was more impressive and useful on account of being at-

Digitized by Google

33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the pos-
34 sessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they besought *him* that he would depart out of their coasts.

---

tended with the loss of property. The sequel shows that the inhabitants were stirred very deeply by it, when otherwise they would perhaps have remained comparatively indifferent. It was unlawful for the owners to keep swine, as the presumption is that they were Jews. The miracle would serve to remove the popular superstition about possessions by evil spirits. For they saw that an animal might be possessed as well as a man, and it would be incredible that the spirit of a departed Jew would voluntarily enter into one of the unclean and most detested of animals. Again, it may be said, that the men originated the proposition, and that Jesus merely assented to it.

33. This miracle produced a most powerful impression upon all who saw, and all who heard of it. And if it served to convince any that Jesus was the Messiah, and to lead them to be his disciples, it compensated them tenfold for the loss of property, and the destruction of the brute animals. The description in this verse graphically, though artlessly, depicts the consternation and stir produced by the miracle. And it is observable, that the relation was respecting what had befallen those possessed of demons, not what had happened to the swine.

34. *The whole city.* A large number of the people. — *They besought him that he would depart.* They perhaps were convicted of their sinfulness, and feared further judgments. Or perhaps some were indignant at the loss they had sustained. Or, their request that he would depart from them might have been inspired by similar motives to that of Peter, after the draught of fishes, Luke v. 8; or to that of the centurion, that Jesus would not enter his house, Matt. viii. 8. The other Evangelists add some further particulars, which are interesting. That the man was restored to his right mind, and clothed. That he wished to accompany his benefactor, but was directed to return home and publish the miracle, since no ill effects could follow from its being known, as Jesus was going to leave that part of the country. That he did as commanded, testifying to the compassion of the Lord, and how great things had been done for him.

It may be proper here to mention the circumstances which indicate that those possessed with demons were simply deranged.

1. If these, and other cases, were not cases of insanity, it would appear that whilst Jesus is described as curing almost every other disease, he is never mentioned as curing a case of insanity, a disorder which more than any other would call for a divine power to remove it, and the cure of which would be peculiarly striking and convincing. And surely insanity was not then unknown.

2. The conduct of the demoniacs is precisely that of the insane. The dwelling in by-places, in the tombs, and in the mountains, Mark v. 5, is an indication of insanity. The propensity to wander, the wearing of no clothes, Luke viii. 27, the being out by night as well as by day, Mark v. 5, and the crying aloud

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

Miracles of Jesus, — continued.

AND he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of 2 the palsy, lying on a bed. And Jesus, seeing their faith, said

and cutting the body with stones, distinctly mark the insane man. The inability to be bound or tamed, the unnatural strength which broke the fetters that confined his feet, and plucked asunder the chains that were on his hands, remind us of the Report of an Insane Hospital; in none of which Reports was there ever given a more terse, striking, and graphic sketch of the conduct of the insane than is contained in this account. The periodical attack (Luke viii. 29, "For oftentimes it had caught him") is a proof of insanity. The language of the man, his ready knowledge of Jesus, and his somewhat impudent address, joined with a salutation of great respect, his original and strange request, his wild notion of being the abode of thousands of evil spirits, which he generalized under the name of the formidable Roman military division, "Legion," and, on the other hand, the language and mode of the miracle of Jesus, all uphold the position of its being a case of insanity. The state of the man after his cure, — "Clothed, and *in his right mind*," Luke viii. 35, — shows clearly of what he had been cured. All these circumstances form a complete picture of the wanderings and subsequent restoration of reason.

"What works of wisdom, power, and love,
Do Jesus' high commission prove!
* * * * *
The shattered mind his word restores,
And tunes afresh the mental powers."

How shall we escape, if we neglect to hear and obey him who comes from God with such clear credentials of his authority, and of whom the Deity has said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him!"

CHAP. IX.

1. Parallel to Mark v. 21; Luke viii. 40.

Jesus yields to the request of the Gergesenes, and crosses over the lake to the other side, to the town of Capernaum, called *his own city* because he had made it his residence. Matt. iv. 13; Mark ii. 1.

2 – 17. Parallel to Mark ii. 1 – 22; Luke v. 17 – 39, who gives a more detailed account than Matthew.

2. *Sick of the palsy, lying on a bed.* His disease was severe and inveterate, and had reduced him to utter helplessness. The bed on which he lay was a kind of mattress, which he could easily take up and carry, himself, when restored to strength. — *Seeing their faith.* How they manifested their faith is particularly related by Mark and Luke. The friends of the paralytic had brought him on a mattress to the house where Christ was. But the press of the crowd was so great, that they could find no direct way to bring him to Jesus, and were obliged to uncover the roof where he was, and let him down on his couch into the court or area of the house where Jesus was teaching. This court or area in the middle of the house was frequently covered only by an awning, or screen, which could be easily rolled up. Houses in the east are generally of one story, and built in the form of a

Digitized by Google

unto the sick of the palsy: Son, be of good cheer; thy sins
3 be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said
4 within themselves: This *man* blasphemeth. And Jesus, know-
ing their thoughts, said: Wherefore think ye evil in your

hollow square, with a flat roof running round the interior court. Going up to the house-top with their sick friend, they unroll the awning, and let the bed down with cords through the tiling, or properly, by the side of the tiling of the roof, into the midst of the company where Jesus sat and taught. He saw their faith, which had inspired them to persevere through all obstacles to obtain his aid. — *Son.* An address of tenderness and condescension. — *Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.* The man was laboring under depression, or perhaps remorse. The compassionate Saviour would encourage and comfort him. The Jews regarded disease as the consequence of sin, and had among them a saying that no diseased person could be healed, until all his sins were blotted out. The expressions, Be thou healed, and, Thy sins be forgiven thee, are regarded by many as having been synonymous. To say one implied no more than to say the other. It is true without doubt, that a far greater amount of the sickness and trouble in the world is caused by sin, than is suspected. Christ is the great physician in the literal, as well as the figurative sense. — *Be* is used instead of *are*.

3. *Certain of the scribes.* Luke mentions that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, who had come from all parts of the country. — *This man blasphemeth.* According to Mark and Luke, they added, "Who can forgive sins, but God only?" To blaspheme is to speak evil against God. The true rendering here of the words would be — "This man speaks impiously." He claims a power to which he is not entitled, and which invades the prerogatives of God. It was true, that none could forgive sins but God. Jesus does not profess to forgive sins himself; he simply declares the fact that they are forgiven. He could read the heart, and decide whether the *conditions* of forgiveness were fulfilled. He could comprehend the will of the Father, and declare his purposes of pardon to the penitent. The prophet Nathan in like manner could say to David: "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." 2 Sam. xii. 13. Jesus gave his Apostles a similar power of forgiving sins, or rather of declaring them forgiven. Matt. xvi. 19, xviii. 18; John xx. 23. If prophets and Apostles could declare men's sins forgiven, certainly it was no impiety in Jesus, and no assumption by him of Divine attributes, to pronounce a person's sins pardoned. As the Son of Man is to be the judge of the world, it was in harmony with his divine endowments by his Father, that he should possess such a knowledge of the state of the heart as to be able to *declare* forgiveness from God to the contrite.

4. *Knowing their thoughts.* This of course does not imply that Jesus was omniscient, as some have falsely inferred. He perhaps read the thoughts of their hearts in the language of their looks. Or, with more probability, we may suppose that a gift of knowing what was in man was vouchsafed among his peculiar powers. The capacity of knowing the thoughts of a few persons present is a quite different thing from the sublime attribute of

Digitized by Google

hearts? For whether is easier? to say: *Thy* sins be forgiven thee? or to say: Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy): Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitude saw *it*, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he saith unto

---

Omniscience. To argue from one to the other is to leap at a conclusion, wide indeed from the premises.

5. *Whether is easier?* Which of the two is easier? In reality one was as easy as the other. Neither was hard to a divine messenger. To see the heart and know that the individual was worthy of pardon, or to work a miracle and raise up the palsied frame, was alike the result of a divine commission and power. As if he had said, If I can heal the sick, I may without impiety absolve the sinner.

6. *But that ye may know, &c.* He gives an ocular demonstration. He proves his right or authority to exercise one prerogative of divinity, to declare the forgiveness of sins, by actually and visibly exercising another, the restoration of one incurably diseased. But the exercise of either prerogative no more implies his deity, as has been strenuously argued, than the miracles of the Apostles, and their power to bind and loose on earth, evince their deity. The argument therefore proves nothing, because it proves too much. — *Power.* Authority, not original power, but delegated. — *Take up thy bed.* The bed of the east was usually a mere mattress, spread on the floor, light and portable.

7. To arise from his bed, take it up, and walk back to his house, from which he had been brought forth a perfectly helpless paralytic, was the plainest possible proof that his cure was complete and miraculous. For, as before observed, in the ordinary way, if palsy is cured at all, it is not cured instantly, but gradually.

8. *Glorified God.* Luke vii. 16. They praised and adored God, they uttered ejaculatory thanksgivings to heaven. Their pious feelings were stirred within them. — *Given such power unto men.* Or, unto a man, Jesus. Properly speaking, only Jesus had shown such power. The plural for the singular. This declaration testifies in what light the Jews looked upon Jesus. They regarded him as one of their own race. They had not the remotest suspicion that he was any thing else. The very matter of their praise was, that God had delegated such great power, had miraculously gifted one of their kind.

9. *Matthew.* Mark and Luke call him Levi. Matthew and Levi were probably two names applied to the same person. Others of the Apostles, as Peter, and Thaddeus, had two names. This is the same individual who wrote the Gospel upon which we are now engaged. Matthew follows the general practice of historians, and speaks of himself in the third person, to avoid egotism. — *Receipt of custom.* Or, custom-house, the place where the custom or toll was paid. The Jews, being

Digitized by Google

10 him: Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his dis-
11 ciples. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples: Why eateth your Master with publicans and sin-
12 ners? But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them: They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

---

under the government of the Romans, were obliged to pay them a tax. Officers were placed in the large towns and cities to collect and receive it. In this case, the custom, or tribute, was one probably that was levied upon persons and merchandise crossing the sea of Galilee. The receipt of custom, or office where it was paid, was situated on the seaside, as appears from Mark ii. 13. — *Follow me*, i. e. Become my constant disciple and attendant. — *He arose and followed him.* Luke adds, — "He left all," which, as his office was no doubt a lucrative one, must have been a great sacrifice. But the Apostle himself makes no mention of it. He was, no doubt, previously acquainted with Jesus. "The call of a publican to be a follower of Christ, and a herald of his religion, was a sign of the sublime superiority of the new faith, in its impartiality, and mercy, over the bigotries of the old; and evinces the discernment and independence of Jesus, in selecting a worthy disciple from an order of men among whom common opinion had pronounced that there was no worth to be found."

10. *Sat.* Reclined, as the custom was at meals. — *In the house. Whose* house Matthew does not state, but from Luke we learn that the entertainment was given by Matthew himself in his own house; perhaps a farewell feast to his friends, and an occasion for them to hear Jesus converse. — *Publicans.* He naturally invites many of his own profession. — *Sinners.* Not necessarily men of bad character, but Gentiles, whom the Jews were accustomed to load with the most opprobrious epithets, calling them dogs, sinners, and every vile name. Both classes were held in utter scorn and contempt by the Jews. A proverb was current: — "Take not a wife from the family of a publican."

11. *Pharisees saw it.* Standing without the house, they probably witnessed what was done; eager to detect something to find fault with. — *Why eateth your Master, &c.* This objection was also brought up against Jesus at other times. Matt. xi. 19; Luke vii. 34, xv. 2. To decline eating with a man was a mark of strong antipathy. 1 Cor. v. 11. But to eat with one was a proof of regard, or sympathy. The doctors of the law accordingly had prohibited the Jews from eating with publicans and Gentiles. The Pharisees, as sticklers for outward rites, of course were punctilious in the observance of this requisition.

12. *They that be whole need not a physician.* This was a proverb in use among the Jews and Gentiles. Jesus reasons with them on their own ground. "I am a healer of the soul. Of course it is to these very persons whom you regard as so sinful and lost, that I ought naturally to come, to restore them. The physician is for the sick, not the well. According to your own

Digitized by Google

But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth: "I will have mercy, 13
and not sacrifice." For I am not come to call the righteous,
but sinners, to repentance.

Then came to him the disciples of John, saying: Why do 14

admission, I am now associating with those very persons who will be most benefited by a spiritual Teacher and Reformer. Instead therefore of reproach, my conduct, on your own principles, is worthy of approbation." The answers of Jesus to his enemies are indeed wonderful. They are like that two-edged sword going out of the mouth of him who was seen in the vision of the Apostle in Patmos. They pierce "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joint and marrow, and are a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

13. *Go ye and learn.* A common phrase among the Jewish teachers, when they wished to refer their disciples to the Scriptures. The Pharisees had asked a question, importing that Jesus was blameworthy in mixing with publicans and sinners. He replies: "I will refer you to your own Scriptures for an answer." The answer of Jesus is thus paraphrased by Norton: "You reproach me for being with tax-gatherers and sinners; it is fitting I should be; the well need not a physician, but the sick. But do not think that you are less morally diseased than those whom you despise. You, no more than they, perform what God requires; whilst you insist on ceremonies and superstitious observances, you neglect what is essential in religion and morality. Go ye, and learn what this means, *I desire goodness, and not sacrifices.* I came to give an invitation to all to accept God's mercy; and, as regards you, as well as them, I did not come to give an invitation to righteous men, but to sinners."—*I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.* A Hebraism, meaning, "I prefer mercy to sacrifice." Hos. vi. 6; 1 Sam. xv. 22; Prov. xxi. 3; Mic. vi. 6–8; Matt. xii. 17. The sense of the citation is manifest. The Scribes and Pharisees were rigid in ritual observances, but lax in morals and character. Jesus would justify his associating with the vile, as being an act of mercy, to restore them to virtue. "Humanity is thus contrasted with a punctilious observance of ceremonial duties, and Christ declares, that a compassionate interest in the miserable and vicious is more acceptable to God than a rigid adherence to the letter of a ritual service." Ceremonies were divinely enjoined under Judaism, and also under Christianity, but they are only the letter of religion, and are always to be deemed subsidiary and secondary to its spirit. Not what we *do*, but what we *are*, determines our moral character in the sight of Heaven.—*Not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.* Some infer that he meant that the good did not need his instruction. But he seems rather to be arguing with the Scribes on their own views. They esteemed themselves as righteous, Luke xviii. 9, and could not therefore lay claim to his attentions; whilst those whom they despised as sinners must of course be the identical persons for whose sake he had come, and he did right therefore in mingling with them to reform them.

14. *The disciples of John.* i. e. John the Baptist, who was probably in prison at this time in the fortress of Machærus. Matt. iv. 12. It would appear from Mark ii. 18,

Digitized by Google

15 we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them: Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and 16 then shall they fast. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up taketh 17 from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do

and Luke v. 33, that the Scribes and Pharisees joined in making this inquiry. — *Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft?* This question was only stated to introduce the topic they were really desirous to have discussed, — *but thy disciples fast not.* The question is in reference to the private, and not public and national fasts. The disciples of John were probably of this class originally, and still continued this custom of their order, especially as they were now in distress on account of their master. These observances being reckoned among the duties of religion, they naturally asked why the disciples of Jesus did not also conform to them.

15. Jesus replies first to the inquiry in reference to that particular time. At present, he says, my disciples do not fast, because they have no occasion for affliction, for which fasting is a natural expression. I, their best friend and master, am still with them. But when I shall be taken from them, an event that will occur in process of time, then they will have cause for fasting. — *Children of the bride-chamber.* Judg. xiv. 11. A Hebrew expression, signifying the friends and acquaintances of the parties who were present at the nuptial rejoicings, and gave attendance at the bridal chamber. Great mirth and festivity attended marriages among the Jews. The figure Jesus employs is therefore a very vivid one to express the incompatibility of his disciples' fasting while he was with them. — *The bridegroom.* John iii. 29. "At a future time, when the disciples would be exposed to the persecutions of their ministry, without his presence to cheer and comfort them, they might be sad in heart, and would then be disposed to fast."

16. This and the following verse have been thus paraphrased by Follen: "In the second place, do you ask why my disciples do not make fasting a regular practice, notwithstanding its sacred character as an old established form of religion? The adherence to any observance, on account of its being an old standing form of religion, is contrary to the youthful spirit of religious freedom that constitutes the essence of my doctrine. I could not, therefore, teach this new doctrine of religious liberty, and at the same time enforce such old and narrow forms of religion as your habitual fasts and prayers, without combining two discordant principles." It would be incongruous to unite a new religion with old rites. — *New cloth.* A cloth not dressed, or fulled, but raw, or unwrought, which when wet would shrink. A patch of such cloth, being put upon an old garment, would occasion a worse rent than before, by pulling away the parts to which it was sewed. So the new doctrines of the Gospel would not harmonize with the old rites of the Pharisees. They were not to expect that Judaism could be repaired and renovated by Christianity.

17. Another illustration is used.

Digitized by Google

men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish; but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came 18
a certain ruler and worshipped him, saying: My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose and followed him, and *so did* his 19
disciples. —— And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with 20
an issue of blood twelve years, came behind *him*, and touched the hem of his garment. For she said within herself: If I may 21

to express the same thought. As, in the last verse, we understand by the new cloth the religion of Christ, and by the old garment the rites of the Pharisees, so, in this, the new wine, and old bottles, stand respectively for the new religion and the old one. The spiritual faith of Jesus, and the ceremonial rigor of the Pharisees, were totally at variance. — *New wine.* Wine unfermented. — *Old bottles.* The bottles referred to by Christ were made of the skins of animals, as sheep and goats. When new, they were capable of being distended, and would hold new wine in a state of fermentation without bursting. But when old and dry, they were not sufficiently strong for the purpose, though they would still without injury hold wine that had been fermented. The Gibeonites speak of their bottles as worn and rent. Josh. ix. 13; Job xxxii. 19; Ps. cxix. 83. Flasks made of skins are still used in several countries, as in the south of Europe.

18–26. Parallel to Mark v. 22–43; Luke viii. 41–56. They give a more detailed account than Matthew.

18. *A certain ruler.* According to Mark and Luke, his name was Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue, a person of some distinction. This office related to the superintendence of the affairs and worship of the synagogue. Acts xiii. 15, xviii. 17. — *Worshipped.* Bowed himself before him. — *My daughter is even now dead.* Or, was just now dying, when I came from my house. She was so sick that she must now be dead. This declaration was confirmed, for a message came that she was dead. She was an only daughter, and about twelve years old. After every other hope had failed, the distressed father had hastened to Jesus, and most movingly entreated him to come to his succor. — *Come and lay thy hand upon her.* This was a customary gesture in invoking a blessing upon one, and is supposed to have been derived from the manner in which the Creator was imaged, as exerting his beneficence by stretching forth his hand. Numb. xxvii. 18; 2 Kings v. 11; Matt. xix. 13; Acts iv. 30.

19. Jesus might have exerted his power at a distance, but he chose to be present in person. His spiritual sympathies drew him to the house of mourning. He spent himself for others. Going, coming, he was the servant of all. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and in that office his peculiar and heavenly greatness consisted.

20. *An issue of blood.* The disease was deemed unclean, Lev. xv. 25, and therefore she does not apply personally to Jesus, or touch

Digitized by Google

22 but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said: Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman 23 was made whole from that hour. —— And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels, and the people 24 making a noise, he said unto them: Give place; for the maid

his person. The duration of her sickness for twelve years, her failing to be relieved or restored by any medical skill, sufficiently show the obstinacy of her disorder. Mark v. 26. But she now applied to a Physician who could subdue any malady of mind or body, and whose services were "without money and without price." Blessed Benefactor! thy exceeding great reward was the fervent love and thankfulness of the wretched, recovered by thy power, whose gratitude "followed thee like an angel." — *Hem of his garment.* This was the mantle or upper garment; the soldiers at the crucifixion divided it into four parts, to each soldier who had assisted in nailing the sufferer to the cross, a part. John xix. 23. The Jews were accustomed in obedience to Moses to put tufts or tassels of threads or strings upon the four corners, or, as it is improperly translated, Num. xv. 38, Deut. xxii. 12, *fringes*. It was one of these tassels the woman touched.

21. *If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.* Or, shall be healed. She wished to make known her wants privily to Jesus. The nature of her complaint deterred her from openly presenting herself before the people. She did not expect, probably, to be healed without the knowledge of Jesus, and by stealth to obtain a cure, without his willing it. Though the general interpretation is, that she believed his garments, without a distinct exercise of his miraculous gifts, would operate as an efficacious charm to remove her disorder.

22. *Him.* Should be the reciprocal pronoun, *himself*. Mark and Luke are more minute, and mention that Jesus made inquiry who had touched him, and that after a pause, in which the disciples, with Peter at their head, endeavored to answer the question by referring to the dense throng around him, the woman came, trembling, and fell down before him, and confessed the whole truth. It was at this moment he said, *Daughter, be of good comfort.* In which words the tenderness of his address is fitted to soothe her fears, whilst he proceeds to pronounce a blessing upon her faith, which, as it had brought her to the feet of Jesus, was the primary cause of the cure. — *Thy faith hath made thee whole.* Or, well. It was her confidence that saved her, as it placed her within the reach of Christ's healing power. That power was the efficient cause, whilst the faith of the woman was the essential condition of the cure. — *Whole from that hour.* Showing that the restoration was miraculous.

23. *Minstrels, and the people making a noise.* It was the custom, both among the Jews, and heathen and semi-barbarous nations, to express grief upon the death of friends and relatives in a violent and boisterous manner. Gen. 1. 10; Numb. xx. 29; Deut. xxxiv. 8. So great was this tendency, that prohibitions were put upon it by Moses. Lev. xix. 28; Deut. xiv. 1. But the Jews

Digitized by Google

is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her 25 by the hand; and the maid arose. And the fame hereof 26 went abroad into all that land.

nevertheless followed the heathen in many respects in their funeral rites. They hired mourners to lament and sing dirges, and play mournful tunes over the dead. See Jer. ix. 17–20; Amos v. 16. A report having been made at Jerusalem that Josephus was dead, he mentions that many persons "hired mourners with their pipes, who should begin the melancholy ditties for them." It was said, "the poorest Jew would afford his wife at her funeral not less than two pipes, and one woman to lament." With those hired to mourn, the friends and neighbors would also join in the dirge with their voices, and beat their breasts, according to what was played by the instruments. Acts ix. 39. The funeral rites of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and other nations, and of Ireland, and many other countries in modern times, are distinguished by tumult and excess. But the Christian doctrine of immortality has blunted the edge of human sorrow, and the gentle spirit of the Gospel has rebuked the violence and heartless hired lamentations, which once prevailed almost universally at funeral occasions.

24. *The maid is not dead, but sleepeth.* Sleep has been called the brother of death. The figure of calling death sleep is frequent in the Bible. Dan. xii. 2; John xi. 11, 13; Acts vii. 60; 1 Cor. xv. 6, 18; 1 Thes. iv. 13–15; 2 Peter iii. 4. Jesus did not deny that she was actually dead, but he would convey the idea that she would be restored again to life; that she would revive, as one from sleep. The extinction of life was only temporary. — *They laughed him to scorn,* i. e. they derided, ridiculed him. Their sudden change from violent lamentation to levity shows them to have been hired mourners.

25. *He went in.* The advantage of comparing the different Evangelists together is apparent here. It might at first seem from Matthew that no one was present in the room when Jesus performed the miracle. But from Mark and Luke we learn that the parents of the girl, and three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John, witnessed the act. These were witnesses enough to testify to the reality of the miracle. The crowd were put forth from the apartment to afford that stillness and quietness necessary to uninterrupted and distinct observation. It also seems to have been desired by Jesus that his miracles might be wrought under a variety of circumstances; sometimes in the presence of few, and sometimes before many, that their genuineness might be more clearly established. — *Took her by the hand.* Indicating the connexion between the agent and the result. The words he used are recorded in Mark and Luke. The latter also mentions another fact of interest; that after she arose he commanded food to be given her, perhaps in further evidence of her entire restoration to soundness.

26. *Fame.* Report. — *All that land.* The whole surrounding country. Though Jesus is no longer present on earth to restore a lost daughter to her parents, or raise up to life the widow's only son, the power of his religion remains, to lift up all that mourn, and cheer every

Digitized by Google

27 And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed
him, crying, and saying: *Thou* son of David, have mercy on
28 us. And when he was come into the house, the blind men
came to him, and Jesus saith unto them: Believe ye that I am
29 able to do this? They said unto him: Yea, Lord. Then
touched he their eyes, saying: According to your faith be it
30 unto you. And their eyes were opened. And Jesus straitly
31 charged them, saying: See *that* no man know *it*. But they,
when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that
country.
32 As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man,
33 possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the

---

weary heart with the unspeakable hope of another life, and the rich mercy of God.

27. *Thou son of David.* This was one of the titles of the Christ or Messiah, as he was to be a descendant of David. Matt. i. 1, xii. 23, xxii. 42; Luke i. 32; John vii. 42. By calling him the son of David, the blind men expressed their belief in him as the Messiah; a belief already shared by many others. John vii. 31. In this case their faith must have rested in a considerable degree on the testimony of others. — *Have mercy on us.* Equivalent to beseeching him to restore his sight.

28. *Come into the house.* The house in which he lived at Capernaum. He wished to avoid the tumult and agitation of the multitude. — *Believe ye that I am able to do this?* This question might have been put to them to draw forth a more distinct avowal of their faith, in the presence of his disciples and others, and thus incline them to a fuller and firmer confidence in him.

29. *Touched he their eyes.* Establishing the connexion between his miraculous power and its effects. — *According to your faith.* This word has now so technical and theological a sense, that we hardly realize that it simply means, in most instances, *confidence*.

30. *Their eyes were opened*, i. e. they were restored to sight. — *Straitly charged them.* Strictly commanded them. He might have been afraid of a popular disturbance, after so many miracles. See Note on Matt. viii. 4.

31. *Spread abroad his fame in all that country.* These men were actuated by principles which we see manifested every day in human conduct. There is a propensity to divulge the secret which is most privily intrusted, and to do the thing which is most positively prohibited. Still their disobedience was inexcusable. Yet they did as many do after recovery from pain and sickness, break all the good resolutions they had formed, and grossly disobey him upon whom a short time before they were calling, "Have mercy upon us."

32. *A dumb man, possessed with a devil.* Or, a demon. The man was dumb probably not on account of defective organs of speech, or on account of deafness, but the particular turn his insanity took was that of dumbness. A deranged person who was melancholy and taciturn was said, in the popular phraseology of that day, to be possessed with

Digitized by Google

dumb spake. And the multitudes marvelled, saying: It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said: He casteth 34
out devils through the prince of the devils.

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in 35
their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with 36
compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his 37

---

a *dumb spirit;* a phrase by which dumbness by insanity was distinguished from dumbness by defective organs of speech.

33. *When the devil*, or demon, *was cast out, the dumb spake.* When the man was restored to his reason, he resumed the faculty of speech. As his madness was attributed to possession by an evil spirit, when his disorder was cured, it was said that the demon had been cast out. — *It was never so seen in Israel.* Probably the great number and astonishing nature of the miracles, performed by Jesus that day, extorted this burst of wonder and admiration. He had, on the same afternoon, raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead, healed the woman with an issue of blood, restored to sight two blind men, and cured a madman, or demoniac. They might well exclaim, "Never before were such wonders as these witnessed in our land."

34. *He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.* Or, demons. Provoked to envy and jealousy by the admiration expressed by the people, the Pharisees wilfully sought to pervert the evidence God gave his Son of his divine authority. This was the sin against the Holy Ghost. Because it was referring the proofs afforded by the power and spirit of God to the agency of an evil spirit, thus resisting the highest and last proof of a commission from on high. It is to be remarked, that this opposition was occasioned by and related to but one class of miracles, the cure of demoniacs. The conclusive and unanswerable reply Jesus made to their cavils upon a similar occasion is found in Matt. xii. 25.

35. Parallel to Mark vi. 6; Luke viii. 1. — What a beautiful delineation of character is embodied in this verse! The Greatest of all goes about doing good as the servant of all. He establishes himself in no regal palace, or learned school, issuing thence his commands, or his doctrines; surrounds himself by no pomp and circumstance. But he mingles freely with all, is accessible and gracious to all. He dispenses the truth as freely as light and air. His sympathies are not restricted to any one class or condition of men, but he regards with interest the whole family of mankind. He heals the sick, comforts the unhappy, warns the evil, and blesses all with the visitings of mercy and hope. Labor and love are the motto of his ministry: —

"From heaven he came, of heaven he spoke,
To heaven he led his followers' way;
Dark clouds of gloomy night he broke,
Unveiling an immortal day."

36. Num. xxvii. 16, 17; John x. 11, 13, and various other passages of Holy Writ, have figures of a similar import, comparing an ignorant or oppressed people to a flock

Digitized by Google

disciples: The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are
38 few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will
send forth laborers into his harvest.

CHAPTER X.

The Appointment and Commission of the Twelve Apostles.

AND when he had called unto *him* his twelve disciples, he

without a shepherd. They touchingly "describe the condition of a people like the Jews, whose religious teachers had neglected their real wants, while they burdened them with the observance of traditional usages. As sheep whose keepers took no care of them would tire themselves in seeking pasture, the common people, left without instruction by their priests, had sought it in vain, till they were suffering from want of spiritual food." Under the religious bondage of worldly Scribes and Pharisees, under the civil subjection of the Romans, the sport of ambitious and evil minded persons, soon to fall victims to the terrible war that levelled their temple and city with the dust, and swept away their surviving countrymen into the slave markets of foreign and heathen nations, how truly, in the Saviour's spiritual, prophetic eye, were they a lost, shepherdless flock! how naturally must his deep affections have yearned to save them! "How often," was his melting language, "would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

37. *Saith he unto his disciples.* He turns to his followers, to call their attention to the spiritual destitution of men, and suggests their duties as the teachers of his religion. — *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.* A beautiful proverbial saying. "In the Rabbinical writings, teachers are figured as reapers, and their work of instruction as the harvest." The ignorant, unspiritual multitudes thronging around them were as a field of grain already ripe and yellow and fit for the sickle. They presented a rich field for religious exertions and instruction. But the reapers were few. Jesus and his little band were all the laborers to cut the boundless waving harvest, and gather it into the granary of God.

38. *Pray ye.* Those who pray that the kingdom of God may come, and his will be done, will pray that teachers may be raised up and sent forth to advance the great moral work. It should be one of our daily aspirations to Heaven, that religion may become the life and hope of all mankind. — *The Lord of the harvest.* Or, its owner, God. In the words of Gannett, "The world presents the same spectacle now that was contemplated by Christ, when he looked upon the multitudes that attended his preaching. The harvest is abundant; men are longing and crying for truth, for religion; the laborers are few; comparatively few in number, and feeble in strength, for so great a work. Pray the Lord, that he will in his gracious providence raise up and send forth those, who shall gather his children from the face of the whole earth into the kingdom of his Son, as a full harvest is gathered into the granary."

CHAP. X.

1. Parallel to Mark vi. 7; Luke ix. 1, 2. — *His twelve disciples.* It

Digitized by Google

gave them power *against* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: the first, 2 Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James

appears from comparing the Evangelists together, that Jesus had already selected twelve men to be his Apostles, having passed the whole night previous to his choice in prayer to God. Luke vi. 12. Twelve was a hallowed number to a Jewish mind, as corresponding to the number of the patriarchs and the tribes of Israel. Matt. xix. 28. It was also a medium between too large and too small a number. The wisdom of Jesus was manifested upon the slightest occasions, and in the smallest particulars.—*Power against unclean spirits, to cast them out.* Or, more literally, power of, or over, unclean spirits, to expel them. See notes on Matt. iv. 24, and viii. 28 – 34. — *Unclean.* In the eye of the law. — *All manner of sickness, &c.* That is, every kind of sickness and disease. The Apostles and early preachers of Christianity were gifted with miraculous powers for the same purpose as was Jesus himself. The attention of a sensual world and age was aroused, and a divine sanction was given to their instructions. Men saw that God was with them in the signs and wonders which they did, which no other man could do, unless thus authorized and empowered from on high.

2–4. Parallel to Mark iii. 13–19; Luke vi. 12–16.

2. *Names of the twelve apostles are these.* We have four lists of this band, one by Matthew, one by Mark, and two by Luke, one in his Gospel, and one in the Acts, i. 13. The same order is not always observed, and there is a variation as to the names, which, however, is easily reconciled. The word *Apostle* signifies *one sent, a messenger*, and was thus used in Jewish and heathen authors. It is now limited to those employed by Christ in spreading the Gospel, to the Twelve first selected, and to Matthias and Paul. The original corresponds to our word *missionaries*, in its sense. — *The first.* This means the first in order, not in authority, or dignity. It is merely a word of introduction to the list, and not a declaration of Peter's superiority to the other Apostles, as some have contended. — *Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother.* We learn from Mark vi. 7, that they were sent forth by two and two, and hence there was a reason for their being registered in the same manner. It is a pleasant thought that several of the Apostles were near relatives, brothers one of another, and some of them related to Jesus, and that the affections of kindred mingled in their spiritual heroism. The home sentiments keep the character true and balanced, as the history of all reformers testifies. The Apostles could not have been fanatics, or enthusiasts, or impostors, or dupes, for they were brethren. Peter and Andrew were brothers; also James the Greater, as he was called, and John; also James the Less, Jude, or Thaddeus, and Simon Zelotes. Seven out of the Twelve were thus in three distinct sets of brothers. Is there no type here to an imaginative soul of that grand truth of Human Brotherhood, which pervades Christianity as one of the component elements of its vital strength? Peter and Andrew were sons of John, or Jona, or Jonas. John i. 42, xxi. 15. Hence Peter

Digitized by Google

3 *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son* of Alpheus, and Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus; 4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed

was called Barjona; Bar, a Syriac word, meaning son. Matt. xvi. 17. He was also called Cephas, a Hebrew word, which in Greek is Peter, and in English is Rock. By this appellation, Jesus marked him out as one fitted by his energy and resolution to aid in establishing his religion upon an indestructible basis. It was common, in ancient as well as modern times, for persons to be called by surnames. *Andrew* was honored by being the first called, John i. 40, 41, or as confessing Jesus to be the Messiah. They had been disciples of John the Baptist. John i. 35, 40. — *James the son of Zebedee.* His mother's name was Salome, who was an attendant on Christ's ministry. Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark xv. 40. He was called James the Greater, to distinguish him from James the Less, in respect to age or size. He was put to death by Herod Agrippa. Acts xii. 2. — *John.* Termed the beloved disciple. He wrote the Gospel called after his name, three Epistles, and the book of Revelation, although in respect to two of the Epistles and Revelation there is some doubt entertained. The four disciples mentioned above were all fishermen, Mark i. 16, 19, and probably others also of the Twelve. James and John were called Boanerges, Mark iii. 17, sons of thunder, either on account of their warm tempers, or glowing eloquence, or on account of an incident related in Luke ix. 54.

3. *Philip.* Philip, Peter and Andrew, James and John, were inhabitants of Bethsaida. Matt. iv. 21; John i. 44. Little is known of Philip, except from the few notices in the New Testament. — *Bartholomew.* Supposed to be the same as Nathanael. John i. 45, xxi. 2. The word means the son of Tolmai, as Barjonas means the son of John, or Jona. He was of Cana. John xxi. 2. Jesus pronounced upon him the memorable eulogium, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." — *Thomas.* Called Didymus. John xxi. 2. Both words signify a twin, which he perhaps was. — *Matthew the publican.* He was also called Levi, Mark ii. 14, the son of Alpheus. He wrote this Gospel to which we are devoting our attention. — *James, the son of Alpheus.* Or, of Cleophas and Mary. John xix. 25; Luke xxiv. 18. He was brother to the two next, Thaddeus, or Jude, and Simon. Compare Mark xv. 40; John xix. 25; Gal. i. 19; Luke vi. 16; Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3. He wrote the epistle called by his name, and was martyred at Jerusalem. — *Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus.* Thaddeus and Jude are the same names, in derivation and meaning. Luke vi. 16; Mark vi. 3. He was the author of one epistle in the canon of the New Testament.

4. *Simon the Canaanite.* Or, Zealot, so called from belonging to Cana in Galilee, or on account of his zeal, the word in the original having such an import. This latter view is corroborated by the epithet used by Luke vi. 15, Acts i. 13. Some suppose that he belonged to a Jewish sect called Zealots. — *Judas Iscariot*, i. e. Judas of Kerioth, or Carioth, a city of Palestine. Judg. v. 25. His crime and his fate are recorded in the Gospels and

Digitized by Google

him. ——These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, 5
saying: Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city
of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost 6
sheep of the house of Israel. And, as ye go, preach, saying: 7
The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the 8
lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received,

---

Acts. He was enrolled among the Twelve. The unblemished conduct and character of Jesus were the more substantiated, inasmuch as this bad man had nothing whereof to accuse him, but declared him innocent. Matt. xxvii. 4.

5. *Into the way of the Gentiles.* Rather, into the way *to* the Gentiles. This prohibition was made that the Gospel might be first offered to the Jews, to whom it was promised, Acts iii. 26, and if rejected by them, then preached to the Gentiles and Samaritans. It was to be supposed, that the Jews were better prepared for Christianity than other nations, and they were to be its bearers to the rest of the world. In the short time the Twelve would have oppórtunity to labor during the mission upon which they were now sent out, they would accomplish more in confining their exertions to Judea. Jesus came in an official character, as the Messiah of the Jews, and to them therefore he ought first to be announced. He confined his ministry, with slight exceptions, among the Jews. The command now given was afterwards superseded by another: "Go and teach all nations." Matt. xxviii. 19. — *Samaritans.* Samaria lay between Judea and Galilee. Its population at this time was a mixed one, springing from a colony of heathen foreigners, and remnants of some of the Jewish tribes settling there after the Babylonish captivity. They seceded from the worship at Jerusalem, and built a temple on Mount Gerizim. They were in a state of deadly hostility towards the Jews, and had no friendly dealings with them. John iv. 9, viii. 48. It was prudent therefore to appeal first to the Jews, and not excite their jealousy by preaching among the Samaritans.

6. *The lost sheep of the house of Israel.* A figure of frequent use in the Scriptures. The Jews were in a truly pitiable state. Misled by their religious teachers; oppressed by their foreign conquerors and rulers: too corrupt to welcome the only one who could have redeemed them; too proud to acknowledge their unhappy condition; well might the Saviour have compassion on them, and send forth his disciples to gather these wanderers home into the true and safe fold. — *House.* Posterity, nation.

7. *The kingdom of heaven is at hand.* The apostles were not sent forth to preach that Jesus was the Messiah, but to proclaim the approach of his kingdom. They were to prepare the way of the Lord, and, going into different parts of the land, to spread everywhere the hope of the speedy establishment of the reign of God, in the person of his Son and Messenger, and by a moral and spiritual awakening of the soul, prepare men to admit the claims of Jesus to the Messiahship. In this respect their office resembled that of John the Baptist, and the commencement of Christ's ministry. Matt. iii. 2, iv. 17.

8. *Raise the dead.* This clause is believed by many to be an interpolation. — *Devils.* i. e. demons.

Digitized by Google

9 freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass, in
10 your purses; nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats,
neither shoes, nor yet staves. For the workman is worthy of
11 his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, in-

Jesus delegated to his disciples the same miraculous gifts with which he had been endowed. Though but partially acquainted with the spiritual aims of his religion, though still cherishing, as is manifest by their subsequent conduct, the delusion of a worldly kingdom, weak in faith, they yet are empowered, equally with their divine Master, to work the most astonishing deeds, and thus attest the godlike authority of their mission. — *Freely ye have received, freely give*, i. e. gratuitously, without making a trade or gain of their powers, as the Jewish exorcists were wont to do, for their own emolument. Acts iii. 6, viii. 18, 20. This was not a prohibition, however, against receiving a support from those among whom they labored. Luke x. 7.

9 – 15. Parallel to Mark vi. 8 – 11; Luke ix. 3 – 5. See also Luke x. 4 – 16.

9. *Gold, nor silver*, i. e. money made of these metals.—*Brass*. The metal now called by this name was invented by the Germans, and is different from the ancient composition. The coin here mentioned was a copper one. — *Purses*. Girdles. The people of the east dressed in full flowing garments. Therefore belts worn around the waist, while walking or exercising, were necessary to secure their clothes. Hence the figure, — "gird up the loins," — to express preparation for labor or action. In these girdles were places provided to be used as purses, which were safe and convenient. Hence zone, or girdle, and purse are used synonymously. The Apostles were to go forth trusting to the hospitality of the people among whom they labored, and their reliance did not prove unavailing. Luke xxii. 35.

10. *Nor scrip*. This was a travelling bag or a wallet, usually made of leather, and employed to hold provisions for a journey. — *Two coats*. Two tunics; garments more like gowns than coats. They were not to put on two tunics, as was customary for a journey. Mark vi. 9. — *Shoes*. Shoes and sandals, consisting simply of a sole tied with thongs to the foot, were both in use among the orientals. The direction here appears to be, that they should go forth accoutred as they were, without anxiously providing any new articles of dress. Or, they were not to use the shoes, or short boots, worn in travelling, but sandals. Mark vi. 9. — *Staves*. Griesbach reads, staff. Mark, vi. 8, says that they might carry a staff. There is no real discrepance. Matthew says they should not *provide* staves if they were without them. Mark, that they might *take* a staff if they already possessed one. The force of the whole passage is, that they should not solicitously spend time to equip themselves with burdensome articles, but go forth as they were, throwing themselves on the generosity of those for whom they labored. — *The workman is worthy of his meat*. Is worthy of his support. Meat is here used for sustenance in general. Those who labored for the spiritual good of mankind were entitled, not in the character of a gift, but of a recompense, to their living. They were deserving of a supply for their temporal wants. 1 Cor. ix. 14; 1 Tim. v. 18.

Digitized by Google

quire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And 12
when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be 13
worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not 14
receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say 15
unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and

11. *Inquire who in it is worthy.* Seek out a candid and good man, and be his guest. He will most readily award you a hospitable reception, and be most competent to further your high objects. — *There abide till ye go thence.* Or, according to Luke x. 7, in the directions to the Seventy, "Go not from house to house." As long as they remained in one town or city, they were to lodge at the same house. This course possessed obvious advantages, in preventing their time being wasted, or offence being given to their host by withdrawing as if dissatisfied; or their being exposed to destitution and insult; or their having the appearance of vagabonds, with no regular abode and important business. The prudential regulations given by Jesus for the conduct of his disciples are admirably adapted to their situation, and prove that the preacher of the Gospel, though going forth on a great errand, is not to neglect the proprieties and advantages of common life.

12. *Salute it.* Judg. xix. 20; 1 Sam. xxv. 6. It was customary in the east, for those who entered a house, to salute the family with "Peace be to this house." Peace was deemed a summary of all blessings. Jesus would not permit his disciples to violate any of the usual courtesies of life, or suppose that on account of their great office they were above the performance of the humblest duties. Well would it have been if all his ministers in every age had borne this truth in mind, and demeaned themselves humbly, gently, and courteously. How little understood, and less practised, is the beautiful principle of Christian politeness!

13. *House*, here, and in the context, means *family*. In some cases it means *nation*; verse 6. John iv. 53; 1 Cor. xvi. 15. The expressions in this verse are Hebrew forms of speech. The sense is this: If the family return your greetings, and receive your message with candor and attention, your invocation of peace upon them will not be in vain, the peace of God will abide with them. But if they prove to be the reverse, and treat you and your errand with coldness, or indignity, then your good wishes will be fruitless; the dove which you sent forth will return, bearing the olive branch of peace in her mouth, having found no rest for the sole of her foot. Ps. xxxv. 13; Is. lv. 11.

14. *Shake off the dust of your feet.* A symbolical action, to express very strongly the criminality of refusing the Apostles a hearing or reception. This illustration is in accordance with the public sentiments of the Jews. The Scribes taught, that even the dust of a heathen land would desecrate their holy soil, and that it was therefore to be shaken from the feet. The injunction of Jesus was literally obeyed by his disciples, who by this act declared that they placed those who did not receive and hear them on a level

Digitized by Google

Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city. —— 16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be 17 ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men. For they will deliver you up to the councils, 18 and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall

with the heathen. Acts xiii. 51, xviii. 6. For a parallel idea, see Matt. xviii. 17.

15. *Sodom and Gomorrah.* An account of the destruction of these places is found in Gen. xix. The country about the Dead Sea, where those cities were situated, bears geological evidence to the present day of the appalling catastrophe. They are often adduced as instances of the judgment of Heaven. — *In the day of judgment.* There is no *the* in the original. No particular day is referred to, but judgment, retribution, whenever it should come. Some have supposed allusion is made to temporal calamities, soon to descend on the Jews for their sins. As mankind are accountable in proportion to their light and privileges, a severer condemnation would be visited on those who rejected Christ and his Apostles than on those who had neglected the example and warnings of Abraham and Lot.

16. *As sheep in the midst of wolves.* We notice here how entirely open and frank our Lord was in speaking of the dangers before them. He permits them not to go unwarned into the conflict. What an infallible evidence is here of his uprightness and honesty; his infinite removal from deception, or enthusiasm! The figure here used is found elsewhere, of comparing the bad to wolves and other wild beasts, and the innocent to sheep and lambs. Lam. iii. 10; Matt. vii. 15; Acts xx. 29; Is. xl. 11; John xxi. 15, 16. — *Wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* The Apostles were to combine two qualities seldom found together; sagacity and simplicity; to imitate two animals most unlike each other; the one the most subtile, the other the most simple in nature. So the perfect character is even that which holds in the nicest equipoise varying traits; the lion heart and lamb-like innocence; the wisdom of the serpent and the simplicity of the dove. The Egyptians used the serpent as a symbol of wisdom. In their mission the Apostles would be exposed to difficulties requiring the utmost caution and prudence, and at the same time they were vehicles of a doctrine demanding entire sincerity and simplicity. Rom. xvi. 19.

17. *Beware of men.* Be on your guard against their plots, for they will seek to ensnare and destroy you. — *They will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues.* This was actually fulfilled upon many occasions afterwards. Acts iv. 5–7, 15, v. 40; 2 Cor. xi. 24. The *councils* were the Sanhedrim and other tribunals among the Jews. Scourging was a severe punishment, inflicted upon the body with rods or thongs. The number of blows was limited to forty among the Jews. Deut. xxv. 2, 3. Thirty-nine were usually given, a scourge of three cords being struck thirteen times with greater or less force in proportion to the crime. The same punishment was in use among other nations, and the number of stripes proportioned to the offence committed. The punishment was a very painful one, as the blows fell upon the naked back and sides, and some-

Digitized by Google

be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver 19
you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it
shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For 20
it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which
speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother 21
to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise

---

times extended round to the breast, cutting up the skin and flesh. The victim stooped forward, and was sometimes bound to a low pillar, that the person inflicting the stripes might do it to better advantage. The sentence was executed sometimes in the synagogues. Matt. xxiii. 34; Mark xiii. 9; Acts xxii. 19, xxvi. 11. Our Saviour himself suffered under this brutal punishment, though unconvicted of any offence. Luke xxiii. 15; John xix. 1.

18. *Before governors and kings.* Though to all human appearance the cause of the Gospel was too humble to attract such notice, yet Jesus foresaw what agitation it was destined to produce, and that kingdoms and empires would not, in all their fancied strength, be able to shut it out or suppress it. — *For my sake.* For the sake of my Gospel. — *For a testimony against them and the Gentiles.* Or, a testimony *to* them and the Gentiles. The witness which the Apostles and disciples bore to the truth of Christianity on those occasions when they were arraigned before the civil authorities, contributed materially to its advancement. The book of Acts, and succeeding ecclesiastical history, establish this point with repeated instances, and show Jesus to have predicted nothing but what was fulfilled.

19, 20. See Luke xii. 11, 12.

19. *Take no thought, &c.* Be not anxious as to the matter or manner of your defence. They might well be alarmed, poor and unlearned as some of them were, at the prospect of being summoned before the great and powerful rulers and statesmen of the world, unless some assurance were given them that they would not be deserted at such crises. — *For it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.* It would appear from the individuality of those speeches of the Apostles and disciples on record, that their inspiration was not of a kind to supersede the activity of their own minds. They were not passive mouth-pieces of the Divinity. But they were aided and illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Conscious of the divine help and authority, they were lifted above all fear, and spoke with a force and point which none of their adversaries could gainsay.

20. *It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father.* Matt. ix. 13, and John xii. 44, have like idioms. It is not *so much* ye that speak, as the spirit of God. Ex. iv. 12. A strong expression, to imply that they would be sustained on those trying occasions by supernatural illuminations and endowments. God himself would aid them. They need not fear, therefore, kings or emperors. The encouragement was the more needed, as the people of the east look upon their rulers, kings, and governors with a superstitious awe, as if they were verily gods.

21. We have in the prediction contained in this verse, which was

Digitized by Google

up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death ;
22 and ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake. But he
23 that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another. For verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till
24 the Son of Man be come. The disciple is not above *his* mas-

afterwards frequently fulfilled to the letter during the persecutions of the Christians, another instance both of Christ's prophetic power and his open-mindedness. When in after years the Apostles were treated with every indignity and cruelty, and in some cases their own friends turned against them, they could not complain that they had not been forewarned of their difficulties. And if their Master's prophecies in relation to their earthly trials held so true, they might well believe that his promises of a better life after death would likewise be gloriously verified. History relates, that their nearest friends and relatives sometimes betrayed the Christians, and consigned them to modes of torture and death too horrible to be described.

22. *Hated of all men.* Universally, not literally by every man. — *For my name's sake.* Because they were Christians. 1 Peter iv. 14, 16. — *He that endureth to the end shall be saved.* This would be true in many ways. He who bore himself manfully to the last, and acted with dauntless courage, would be the most likely to find safety. Or, he who persevered in his Christian faith, despite the hatred of men, would be saved from the destruction of the Jews and their city, as actually happened. Or, he who was faithful unto death would obtain everlasting salvation. Let each judge which is the probable sense. Jesus addressed it to them as a motive to encourage them to hold out to the end.

23. *Flee ye into another.* Acts ix. 30, xvii. 10. They were not rashly and needlessly to lose their lives. When persecuted, they were to flee, if possible; and by thus doing they did not compromise or betray their cause, but helped it forward, inasmuch as wherever they were scattered they preached the truth. Thus the persecution mentioned in Acts viii. 4, gave a wider extension to the Gospel, and the purpose of its enemies was defeated. — *Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, &c.* Ill treated in one place, they were to choose another as the sphere of their exertions. They would not in this way visit all the towns in Palestine before the coming of the Son of Man. — *Till the Son of Man be come.* Much obscurity envelopes this phrase, and many different interpretations have been advanced. But the most probable is that which regards the coming of the Son of Man as the time when, about forty years after the crucifixion, Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple razed to the foundations, the Jewish festivals and the national rites and worship brought to an end, and Christianity established and confirmed. Matt. xvi. 28, xxiv. 30, 34; Mark ix. 1; Luke ix. 27. Jesus would thus urge their activity in proclaiming the Gospel, because the time was short, and the work great.

24. *The disciple is not above his master, &c.* These are proverbial phrases, which were in use among the Jewish teachers. It was to re-

Digitized by Google

ter, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disci- 25
ple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If
they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much
more *shall they call* them of his household? Fear them not 26
therefore. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be
revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you 27
in darkness, *that* speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the
ear, *that* preach ye upon the house-tops. And fear not them 28

---

mind them that they need expect no better fate for themselves than their Master suffered. They should not repine under their trials, for their Lord had already endured the same or greater. John xv. 20. Similar language is also used for other purposes. Luke vi. 40; John xiii. 16.

25. *It is enough for the disciple, &c.* The disciple must be contented to suffer the same hardships and persecutions as his Master. — *Beelzebub.* To escape the necessity of acknowledging his divine authority, and yet being unable to deny the fact of Christ's miracles, the Scribes and Pharisees imputed them to the agency of evil spirits. "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." Matt. xii. 24, 27. The meaning of the name is lord of flies, or lord of filth. 2 Kings i. 2, 16. He is called the god of Ekron. The inhabitants of that region appear to have worshipped him as a protector from the insects which ravaged their land. "He is never called a devil, or represented as a fallen angel." Little is known, however, of the connexion between the term as used in the Old Testament and in the New. It is sufficient to understand, that it was a term of the deepest insult and scorn which Jewish hatred could devise to heap upon the head of Jesus. And the disciples could expect no milder treatment than their Master had received.

26–33. See Luke xii. 2–9.

26. *Therefore.* Better, *nevertheless*, fear them not. — *For there is, &c.* The reason why they were not to fear contempt and persecution was, that the truth was great, and would prevail; Christianity would gloriously triumph, and their course of conduct would be justified in the eyes of all mankind; and when the secrets of all hearts were revealed, they would be recompensed with eternal life for all they had labored and suffered on earth. Eccles. xii. 14; 1 Cor. iv. 5.

27. *What I tell you in darkness, &c.* The instructions I give you in private are to be publicly proclaimed. What I teach you in obscurity is to go forth in light and glory, and fill the earth. Jesus had not one doctrine for the initiated, and another for the ignorant, like the priests and philosophers of old, but his teachings were alike intended for all conditions of men. — *What ye hear in the ear, &c.* This is thought to refer to a Jewish custom. The doctors of the law had interpreters, who received what they said by its being whispered in the ear, and then made it public to the audience. — *House-tops.* The houses of the east had flat roofs, which in mild weather were much frequented at certain hours of the day. The minister of the synagogue, according to Lightfoot, gave notice of the coming of the Sabbath by sounding with a trumpet six times

Digitized by Google

which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather
fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them
30 shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the
31 very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not there-
32 fore; ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever
therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also
33 before my Father, which is in heaven. But whosoever shall

---

from a high house-top. Among the Turks the hour of prayer is similarly announced by a crier. The phrase denotes, therefore, that what was spoken secretly should be proclaimed in the most public manner.

28. While you are thus conspicuously preaching, fear not, Jesus says, human scoffers and persecutors; rather stand in awe before Him who is not only master of our present, but also of our eternal destiny, and who can punish in the severest manner not only body, but soul, in the future world. Let the fear of him conquer all other fears. The disciples would be tempted by temporal hopes and apprehensions, but these were to be subdued by motives drawn from God and eternity.

29. *Farthing*. Equal to about seven mills of our currency. — *One of them, &c. Two* sparrows were worth but a farthing, and not *one* of those creatures, thus cheap in the eyes of men, was neglected by the kind Creator. The beautiful argument is, If God takes such interest and care of the least of birds, how much more will he guard his dear child, man. — *Without your Father*. Without his oversight and permission. "Not one of them is forgotten before God."

30. Another illustration of the minuteness of the Divine Providence. God's care extends, as well as his knowledge, to the smallest particulars. How surely then will he protect and bless his human offspring, his saints, his Apostles! If their hairs are numbered, how much more will their heads be shielded, and their souls strengthened! 1 Sam. xiv. 45.

31. Matt. vi. 26. Since the Divine Being provides for animals, much more will he for his moral creatures, made in his likeness, useful in advancing his designs, and destined to rise and improve for ever. Watching over the sparrow, he is pledged not to neglect man. Such considerations were eminently fitted to soothe and cheer the disciples of Jesus in their approaching trials; and they are equally adapted now to comfort the lonely and suffering, and strengthen all our hearts for the dangers and trials of life.

32. This verse is connected with the 27th. The intervening portion consists of encouragements to the persecuted. What Jesus taught his disciples privately, they were to preach in the most public manner. They were to acknowledge themselves his followers openly, before the world. In every scene, and every act, Christ may be confessed. We are to manifest everywhere that we are his disciples, by obeying his commandments and breathing his spirit. In the church, in the family, in the scenes of business, in the festival, and at the funeral, we are to show ourselves Christians, by

Digitized by Google

deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father, which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace 34
on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am 35
come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes *shall be* they of his own 36

trusting, following, loving, imitating our blessed Master. Thus confessing him to be our Saviour before men, we are assured that he will acknowledge us as his disciples in the presence of God, and in the realms of the blest.

33. But on the other hand, if his disciples did not adhere to him through evil report and through good report, if they denied him, he would of course not acknowledge them to be his followers, unless, like Peter, they repented again, and professed to be his disciples. The declaration in these two verses served to animate and warn his followers and others at that time, and they are not less applicable now. If we confess Christ before men, he will confess us before his Father and our Father. If we deny him before men, he will deny us before God and all good beings. Let the promise cheer us, and the admonition warn us.

34. *Think not that I am come, &c.* The effect of the coming of our Lord is here put, by a strong figure of speech, for the object or purpose of that coming. It certainly never was the direct aim of Jesus to send strife into families or communities. His intentions were pacific. His birth-song was, "On earth peace." But it would be the unavoidable result of his coming and the gradual spread of his religion in the face of a sinful world, to stir up opposition, hatred, and party spirit. The Gospel would divide men into sects before it would finish its work and produce a state of union. Severe diseases need powerful remedies. As the world was deeply corrupted, the purifying fire, Matt. iii. 11, Luke xii. 49, and the separating sword of the Spirit, must go forth to purge the earth and cut off its abominations before there could be a reign of peace. There can be no peace, until the conditions of peace are complied with. This prophecy of Jesus has been fulfilled on every page of ecclesiastical history, and is now fulfilling. — *I came not to send peace, but a sword*, i. e. shall send a sword, rather than peace. The consequences temporarily of my advent will be as warlike as if I had come on purpose to produce dissension. But those consequences are not chargeable to religion, but to the prejudices and passions of men. In the end, Christianity produces peace in the soul, peace in the world, peace towards God.

35. Micah vii. 6; *I am come to set*, i. e. the temporary effect of my coming will be to set the nearest relatives at variance with one another. As all cannot think alike and feel alike, as there will be some faithful to the injunctions, and others not so, there will inevitably arise ill-will, contention, treachery, and persecution, even amongst families and between friends. But the Apostles were not to be terrified when they beheld the engine of division at work, for they had been forewarned what to expect.

36. The ordinary law of enmities would be reversed. Foes would spring up in the bosom of the fami-

Digitized by Google

37 household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is
not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more
38 than me is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross,
39 and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth
his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake
40 shall find it. He that receiveth you receiveth me; and he that
41 receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth
a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's
reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name
of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward.

---

ly itself, more bitter and treacherous than strangers. See verse 21.

37. But a caution is added, that they should not be deterred from religion by these feuds and divisions. They were to triumph over private feelings, over the partialities of friendship and relationship, in espousing the cause of truth. Nothing was to stand in the way of their becoming followers of Christ. The cause of God should be dearer than peace purchased by ease and indifference. Father, mother, brother, sister, wife, child, are dear ties all, but there are even holier than these, — a Heavenly Father, a Divine Brother. — *Is not worthy of me.* Is not entitled to be called my disciple. "He who could not rise above the strongest ties of kindred and affection, and surrender all relatives and friends for the sake of the Gospel, was not fit to be its advocate."

38. *Taketh not his cross, and followeth after me.* Here is a distant allusion, perhaps, to the manner of Christ's death on that instrument. It was the custom for the criminal to carry his own cross to the place of execution. So did Jesus Christ. It has been said, that what was usually carried by the doomed was not the whole cross, but the piece put at right angles near the top. This was a refinement of cruelty and disgrace, to compel the individual to bear the instrument of his own torture. Jesus signifies in this vivid manner that his followers were to be daunted by no hardships and dangers, but to be fearless in their profession of his religion, even in the prospect of exquisite suffering and death. And many did follow their Master to the cross and the stake, and died in vindication of his holy Gospel.

39. The word *life* is used in this verse in two senses, as the word *dead* is in Matt. viii. 22. The meaning is, that he who preserves his earthly life by base compliances will lose his spiritual one, and that he, who, faithful to duty and religion, undergoes suffering and death, will secure spiritual and eternal life. The renunciation of self, of life, of this world, in the cause of religion, will secure life everlasting.

40. But in the midst of difficulty and discouragement, they would have the satisfaction of meeting with some good men who would receive them, and in receiving them would receive the Gospel of God and his Messiah. Respect to the ambassador is respect to the sovereign who sends him.

41. *Prophet.* Used here in the sense of a public teacher of religion. — *Righteous man.* A private Christian. Those, who, in times of peril, hospitably entertained the

Digitized by Google

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones 42
a cup of cold *water* only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say
unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

CHAPTER XI.

The Testimony of Jesus respecting himself and John the Baptist, and his Rebuke of the impenitent Jews.

AND it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of com-
manding his twelve disciples, he departed thence, to teach and
to preach in their cities.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, 2
he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him: Art thou he that 3

---

persecuted, would be entitled to equal rewards in the sight of God with their guests. — *In the name of.* In the character of; to receive *as* a prophet, *as* a righteous man, i. e. treating them kindly on that account.

42. *These little ones.* As if he had said, My children. A phrase of endearment; or perhaps one of humility, signifying his lowly, obscure disciples. — *A cup of cold water only*, i. e. the smallest office of kindness and hospitality. — *He shall in no wise lose his reward.* If so slight a favor was done to a person *because* he was a disciple of Jesus, it would show an interest in religion, and would not, therefore, go unrewarded. The value of human actions consists in the motive with which they are performed. The least deed, if performed in reference to the will of God, under a sense of duty, is more honorable and more rewarded, than the greatest, done with selfish views.

CHAP. XI.

1. This verse would be more properly attached to the tenth chapter, for it is connected with it in sense, and it is not particularly related to the next verse, which begins a new subject. — *Had made an end of commanding.* Had finished giving his instructions. — *Thence.* He was now in the vicinity of Capernaum. Thence he went forth to teach and to preach, to instruct privately and publicly, in *their* cities, i. e. in the cities of Galilee. We see that our Master imposes no duties on his disciples which he does not readily undertake himself. He enforced his injunctions by his own example; a model worthy of imitation by all who instruct or command others, whether parents, or teachers, or ministers, or rulers.

2 – 19. See Luke vii. 18 – 35.

2. *John had heard.* By means of his disciples, Luke vii. 18. — *In the prison.* Rather, in prison. John had been thrown into prison in the fortress of Machærus, which was a short distance northeast of the Dead Sea. See Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews, B. 18, chap. 5, sec. 2. The cause of this act of Herod Antipas was the freedom with which John reproved him for marrying his brother's wife unlawfully. See Matt. xiv. 3, 4. — *The works of Christ.* These stood out prominently to public notice, and awakened the wonder of multitudes. They were even borne to the dungeon of John. — *He sent two of his disciples.* His disciples still ad-

Digitized by Google

4 should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them: Go and show John again those things which 5 ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame

hered to him in his adversity, and obeyed him as before. Those friends who continue faithful in the day of trouble are friends indeed.

3. We learn from the narrative that John and Jesus did not proceed in concert, but acted independently. Whatever testimony therefore either gave to the character or claims of the other has the value of impartial and independent evidence. There could have been no collusion between them. — *Art thou he that should come?* A phrase answerable to "Art thou the Messiah?" — *Or do we look for another?* Are we to expect another? A Messiah had been long foretold, and the Jews were in eager anticipation of his coming. He was usually spoken of, therefore, as He that should come, the Great Coming One. Various views have been taken, by different writers, of the motive which prompted John to send this message to Jesus. Some hold that he wished to identify Jesus, and ascertain whether he was the one whom he had baptized, and whom he knew to be the Messiah. Some, that he wished to satisfy his own mind whether Jesus was the Messiah. Some, that, being convinced himself, he wished to confirm his doubting disciples, and attach them to Jesus, if he himself should be destroyed. Others, that having originally, when he had baptized Jesus, and seen and heard the testimony from heaven, and declared him to be "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," been persuaded that Jesus was the actual Messiah, yet that his delaying to assume the outward sovereignty supposed to belong to that office, and delaying to rescue him so long imprisoned, which he could so easily effect by his miraculous power, had shaken his previous belief, and that he now wished to decide the matter by a reference to Jesus himself. The last seems the most rational interpretation of John's conduct. His ideas of the office of the Messiah were similar to those of his countrymen at large, who were looking for a temporal kingdom. This seems to be indicated by Jesus himself in this chapter, verse 11. Languishing in confinement, his active mind became impatient and perplexed, he longed for the speedy establishment of the Messiah's reign, under which he would probably obtain his liberty, and witness the great objects of his mission advanced. He sends to Jesus, in his trouble and disappointment, to learn his movements and plans. His message was, "Art thou the real Christ, or are we disappointed in you, and must we still look for another to come?" A vein of impatience, therefore, and also of rebuke, runs in the question. This solution comports best with the declarations of John, the circumstances in which he was placed, his probable conceptions of the Messiah, the ardor of his character, and the language of the message, the reply to it, and the subsequent remarks by Jesus on the office and character of his Forerunner.

4. *Go and show John again.* *Again* should be omitted. This seems to indicate clearly that John asked this question and waited for a reply for his own satisfaction, rather than to strengthen the faith of his disciples in Jesus. — *Those things which ye do hear and see.*

Digitized by Google

walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them; and blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me. —— 6

The messengers came at a favorable hour; for we learn from the parallel passage in Luke vii. 21, that Jesus was then in the very act of healing the sick, and casting out demons. Hence, according to his usual manner of teaching, he drew an answer from the events of the moment and the spot.

5. See Is. xxxv. 5, 6, lxi. 1, 2, 3; Luke iv. 18, 19. The answer of Jesus was calm, prudent, and to the point. It arose spontaneously from the circumstances of the occasion. It foreclosed priestly rage, or the equally embarrassing popular enthusiasm, to which an explicit declaration, in so many words, that he was the Messiah, would have exposed him. It presented the solid foundation of his claims, both to John and to after generations. He mentions two kinds of evidence, that of miracles, and that of the philanthropy of his religion. One includes the various specifications of healing the sick and raising the dead; the other, the fact that he preached the Gospel to the poor. He applied the same rule to himself that he gave to test others. Judge the tree by its fruits. His life was his demonstration. His deeds were his arguments. As Nicodemus said, "No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Jesus often appealed to his miraculous deeds as proofs of the divinity of his mission. And he must have best known on what grounds it rested. John v. 36, x. 25, 37, 38, xiv. 11, xv. 24. Again, his impartial love and labors for the poor, as well as the rich; for the slave, the beggar, the outcast leper, as well as the powerful and refined, could only have proceeded from him who dwelt in the bosom of God, whose mercies are free to all his creatures. He rose above the narrowness of his age and country, the ignorance of Galilee, and the bigotry of Scribes and Pharisees, who despised the people, John vii. 48, 49, and taught with the inspiration and authority of the impartial Father of all. In saying that the poor had the Gospel preached unto them, he did not mean that it was not also preached, and to be preached, to the rich; or that he had any different Gospel for the poor from that for the rich; but that the glad tidings of heaven, the highest good, the happiest privileges of which human nature was capable, were to be brought by his Gospel within the reach of the poorest as well as of the richest. He taught no *exoteric* or public doctrine to the poor and ignorant, and an *esoteric* or secret doctrine to the learned, like most of the ancient philosophers. It was a new era, when all men, without distinction of nation or condition, were called to all the highest blessings and hopes of the children of God. None but a divinely commissioned teacher could have conceived or effected such a mighty revolution in human affairs. Let the Gospel continue to be preached to the poor, till no unhappy, suffering soul, in the dark haunts of our cities, or in unknown heathen wastes, shall pine in ignorance of its blessed tidings. Missions, and ministries to the poor, are at once the fruits and the proofs of the divinity of the Gospel.

6. *Blessed is he, &c.* Mingled in this beatitude is a slight tinge of reproof, that John should be scandalized that he had not assumed the

Digitized by Google

7 And, as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John: What went ye out into the wilderness to
8 see? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear
9 soft *clothing* are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

temporal sovereignty supposed to belong to the Messiah. But the idea is conveyed in the most delicate and inoffensive manner; even in a benediction. — *Not be offended in me.* Finds no cause of offence or stumbling in me, though I act contrary to his wishes and hopes. Blessed is he who cavils not at my mode of proceeding, or character, or doctrine, who finds nothing in me to drive him away from truth and God; but who, whatever violence may be done to his preconceived notions of the Messiah's kingdom and worldly glory, regards me with a docile, trusting, loving disposition. This answer was adapted "to awaken John to new patience, thought, and faith."

7. As the messengers of John were going away, Jesus generously pronounced a high eulogium on him, and expressed his confidence in John as of firm integrity, and consistency, and more than a prophet in his office. Perhaps he wished to avert any prejudice which might arise against John on account of the nature of his inquiries, and his own reply to them, and to renew the people's impressions of John's preaching and predictions. He appealed directly to his hearers themselves. — *What went ye out into the wilderness to see?* What was your motive in flocking around John? *Wilderness* means here an uncultivated and thinly peopled country. — *A reed shaken with the wind?* As much as to say, Did you go to see a vacillating, inconstant man, bending this way and that, like a reed shaken in the breeze? A strong negative answer is implied, and, agreeably to such an idiom, the next sentence begins with *but*. No; you went to see one steadfast and immovable, a prophet of the most inflexible temper.

8. *But*. A repetition of the question in a new form. — *A man clothed in soft raiment?* A delicate, voluptuous person, a courtier, apparelled in purple and fine linen? Such were not the garments of John. He was dressed in camel's hair, and a leathern girdle around his loins, but he was greater than courtier or king. — *They that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.* You must go, not to the wilderness and to John, but to the palaces of kings, to see those that are clothed in soft raiment and live daintily, and who have a corresponding effeminacy and capriciousness. Luke vii. 25. — *Soft*, i. e. made of the finest materials.

9. *But*. Indicating again a negative reply to the question of the last verse. — *A prophet — and more than a prophet.* The people crowded to hear John as a religious teacher, reformer, and prophet. But he was more than a common prophet; because he was himself the subject of prophecy; because he not only predicted the coming of the Messiah, like the other prophets, but prepared his way, and inaugurated him into his office by baptism; because he was the connecting link of two dispensations, the twilight, in which Jewish darkness and Christian day melted into each other. The sketch

Digitized by Google

For this is *he* of whom it is written: "Behold, I send my mes- 10
senger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before
thee." Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of 11
women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist;
notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is
greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until 12
now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent
take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied, 13
until John. And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which 14

---

of John here given, though short, is vivid and powerful, drawn by a master's hand.

10. *Is written.* Malachi iii. 1. Similar language is used by Isaiah, xl. 3, and quoted Matt. iii. 3, see note thereon, also Mark i. 2; Luke i. 17, 76; John i. 23.—*Prepare thy way before thee.* As pioneers preceded the march of eastern kings and their armies, so did John the Baptist go before Jesus, to prepare the people for the coming of his kingdom of righteousness.

11. *Among them that are born of women.* A circumlocution for *men.* —*A greater than John the Baptist.* He was greater than any others, greater even than the prophets, on account of his office, and privileges, as the Forerunner and Witness of Christ. He saw and heard what kings and priests and prophets had desired to see and hear, and desired in vain.—*Least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.* Not necessarily greater in character, or virtue, but favored with greater privileges. For the disciple of Christ, or the subject of his kingdom, although comparatively an obscure member of it, possessed, after the resurrection and the descent of the Spirit, more correct views of the divine purposes towards mankind, and of the honor, glory, and immortality to which they were called, than any Jew, though he were the herald of Christ, could enjoy. How great are the privileges and obligations of Christians, if they are more favorably situated for divine knowledge and improvement than John the Baptist!

12. Luke xvi. 16.—*The days of John the Baptist*, i. e. from the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the attention of the people had been eagerly directed to the Messiah's kingdom. The new religion "suffereth violence," like a prize that is earnestly snatched at and seized, or like a city that is assaulted. We learn elsewhere that immense crowds pressed around John as he preached and baptized, and around Jesus as he wrought miracles and instructed his disciples and the people. Yet their warm interest was often a blind enthusiasm. In the language of Norton on this verse, "Jesus referred to those many Jews, who, possessed with false notions of the character of the Messiah, as a deliverer from the tyranny of the Romans, and ready for deeds of violence, were eager to enlist as his followers, striving to force themselves upon him, without any of the dispositions he required in his disciples."

13. *Prophesied, until John.* The prophets were your instructers and masters until John. He has introduced a new era, and the ancient dispensation is to be superseded by a more full and affecting revelation of God's will.

Digitized by Google

15 was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.
16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,
17 and saying: We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lament-

---

14. *If ye will receive it.* If you can credit it. Implying that it would be difficult for them to believe it. — *This is Elias, which was for to come.* The same name is written Elijah in the Old Testament. The history of this great prophet and reformer is found in 1st and 2d Kings. It was predicted that the Messiah would be preceded by a herald to prepare his way. Mal. iv. 5. See also Matt. xvii. 10–13. Hence an expectation had grown up among the Jews, that Elijah in his own person would appear as the Forerunner. They seem also to have anticipated that Jeremiah or some other of the old prophets would rise up to grace the Saviour's coming. Matt. xvi. 14; John i. 21. It was predicted in Luke i. 17, that John would be endued with the spirit and power of Elijah. When John, therefore, replied to the question of the Jews, John i. 21, he probably only replied to their literal understanding of the prophecy, and denied that he was the identical Elijah. He did not deny that he was *an* Elijah, in his spirit, power, and office, a fearless, successful reformer.

15. Let him who hath the faculties of hearing and understanding see to it that he give candid attention. A formula of frequent use, and of frequent need, as well now as then. The matter was worthy of their especial notice; for if John was the predicted Elijah, as had just been plainly declared, then Jesus was the predicted Messiah.

16. *Whereunto shall I liken this generation?* Jesus continues the same subject in sorrowful reference to the stubbornness of the Jews, and their backwardness to believe on the messengers of God. How, he says, shall I describe this wayward race? — *It is like unto children.* The Jews are compared, not to the children who called, but to their companions who were called, and who were so difficult that they could neither be pleased by the song of joy, nor the strains of mourning. — *Markets.* Places of public concourse, and thoroughfares of business, where children as well as men would resort.

17. *We have piped unto you.* Here is a reference to the dramatic sports of children, who play festivals and funerals. In eastern countries it was customary on joyous occasions for the musician to strike up his tune, and the company to dance to it; and at funerals for the mourning song to be commenced, and those present to follow the procession, lamenting and beating their breasts. These things were *acted* by children in the streets; and part of them refusing to follow their leader gave origin to our Saviour's happy illustration. "I have found a comparison for the inconsistency and obstinacy of this generation. It is like contrary children, who are satisfied neither with playing festival, nor playing funeral, who are sullenly determined not to be pleased, notwithstanding all the efforts of their playmates to find something that might suit them." The Jews were so wilful and fastidious, that they would be pleased, neither by the austerity of John the Bap-

Digitized by Google

ed. For John came neither eating nor drinking; and they 18
say: He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and 19
drinking, and they say: Behold, a man gluttonous and a wine-
bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners: But Wisdom is jus-
tified of her children. ——Then began he to upbraid the cities 20
wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they

---

tist, nor the mild condescension of Jesus Christ. They were a nation of fault-finders, and nothing could please them.

18. *Neither eating nor drinking.* Not literally going without food and drink, but living very abstemiously. See Matt. iii. 4. Luke says, "neither eating *bread*, nor drinking *wine;*" i. e. leading an ascetic and secluded life, and not partaking of food regularly. — *He hath a devil.* He hath a demon. He is melancholy or mad. For the Jews attributed low spirits and insanity to possession by demons. The same slander was uttered against Jesus. John vii. 20, viii. 48, x. 20, 21.

19. *Came eating and drinking.* Observed the usual customs of social life, and kept no fasts. — *A man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend, &c.* With the cheerful, familiar, and gracious manner of Jesus, and his mingling in all society, even that of publicans and sinners, they were as ready to find fault, as with the abstemious and stern life of the Baptist. Nothing will satisfy those that will not be satisfied. — *But Wisdom is justified of her children. Of* is old English for *by.* The children of wisdom are the wise, as the children of disobedience are the disobedient. Eph. ii. 2. Wisdom is the wise course adopted by John and Jesus respectively, which would be vindicated or approved, as best fitted for the ends they came to fulfil, by all wise and candid minds. Such is the general maxim as applied to this particular case. This interpretation agrees best with the context; for having just before shown that the Jews were inconsistent and cavilling, Christ now, by way of contrast, exhibits the different judgment which the wise would pass upon the same measures. They would justify John in his mode of life, and Jesus in his, aware that each acted best according to the high office he filled, and the circumstances in which he was placed. The character and conduct of each were best adapted to his particular sphere and duties. — We find at the present day some, like the ancient Jews, that are disposed to cavil when a good object is presented to them, no matter what its nature or claims. To find fault is their element, and a wilful fastidiousness and lawless caprice their besetting sin. They may indulge in the same disposition now that led the Jews to reject John for his austerity and Jesus for his cheerfulness, and be subject to a like condemnation. — "Observe, especially, that God's ministers are variously gifted; the ability and genius of some lies one way, of others, another way. Some are Boanerges, sons of thunder; others Barnabases, sons of consolation; yet all these worketh that one and the self-same spirit, and therefore we ought not to condemn either, but to praise both, and to praise God for both, who thus tries various ways of dealing with persons of various tempers." — *Henry.*

20–24. See Luke x. 12–16.

20. A new paragraph begins here, though it is connected in sense with

Digitized by Google

21 repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Beth-
saida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had
been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long
22 ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be

---

the preceding one. — *Upbraid.* To reprove or chide. — *Mighty works,* i. e. miracles. They had resisted the highest evidence he could give of a divine commission, and still continued impenitent. What sin could be more unpardonable than this, which took away the motives to repentance, and the conditions of forgiveness!

21. *Woe unto thee.* This is not so much a denunciation as a prediction; not, let woe be unto thee, but, woe will be unto thee. See Matt. xxiv. 19. There is compassion also in it, and we may suppose that Jesus uttered it with a tone of the tenderest sorrow and pity. *Alas for thee* would, according to some commentators, more truly express the sentiment of Jesus. The order of the warnings is varied in Luke by the mention of Sodom first, chap. x. 12, whereas in Matthew it is put last. — *Chorazin — Bethsaida.* These were villages in Galilee, situated near Capernaum, where he then was, and on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Their very locations are now matters of conjecture. Jesus had preached and performed his miracles in all places in that vicinity. The shores of this inland sea were his resort. But with increase of privileges there always comes increase of responsibility; and these towns, where the miracles of Christ had been wrought, and his discourses delivered, and his daily shining life of goodness passed, must have been tenfold hardened, if they continued impenitent. — *Tyre and Sidon.* These cities, so proverbially wicked, were situated in Phœnicia, northwest of Palestine, on the Mediterranean Sea, about twenty miles distant from each other, and were distinguished for their commerce, wealth, and luxury. Judgments were denounced by the prophets, Isaiah xxiii.; Ezek. xxvi., xxviii., against Tyre, on account of her idolatry and wickedness, which were signally fulfilled. It was repeatedly taken and destroyed, and not a vestige of its former glory remains. A few fishermen now spread their nets to dry amongst the ruins of its walls. A like fate befell Sidon. The waves of the sea now dash on lonely rocks, upon which were built the palaces in which thousands and tens of thousands once revelled in pomp and pleasure. So surely is sin not only a reproach, but a ruin to any people, however powerful or rich. Such is the law of God. — *They would have repented long ago.* Tyre and Sidon, like Nineveh, might have repented and reformed, had they been warned of their impending desolation. They were not irreclaimable. Jesus used these places as illustrations; yet incidentally. It was a remarkable declaration, and is not without its remote significance touching the laws of retribution. For they who sinned under less light will be punished with less rigor, and the opportunities and motives to repentance that were not addressed to them at one time may be at another. *Sackcloth.* Esther iv. 1; Jonah iii. 5; Neh. ix. 1. A rough cloth, made of goat's hair, or coarse linen, or wool. It was worn by mourners, or as a sign of humiliation. — *Ashes.* It was customary in the east, where all emotions, whether of joy or sorrow, are ardently expressed, to lie in the ashes, or to cover the head

Digitized by Google

more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto 23 heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that 24 it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of

---

with dust or ashes, as a token of grief. Job ii. 12; Jer. vi. 26. Says an interesting writer, "We cannot read the record of sorrowful and depressing remembrances which this train of thought (see verses 16 - 19) summons before Jesus, without a keen feeling of the painful trials and disappointments of that tender and sympathetic mind. There flitted before his quick thought the scenes where he had spent his strength for nought, — the cities on whose houses and people his spirit had shed its best energies and love, — and shed them only to be like water spilt upon the ground, and that cannot be gathered. Devoted to them, life and mind, there comes back to him no return but this recurring experience, that they were offended in him. Nazareth, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, are all before him, pressing their bitter memories on his fainting heart; all sought and lost, toiled for, but not won; sought by works that might have averted heathen Tyre and Sidon from their desperate courses; and ministered unto by one, who, if he had preached unto Sodom, might have awakened even it to repentance, and stayed the fiery indignation of Heaven."

22. See Matt. x. 15, and the note thereon.

23. *Thou, Capernaum.* A more direct address because he was in it at the time. — *Exalted unto heaven.* Is. xiv. 13, 14. Art favored with the most exalted privileges. Jesus himself lived there. It was even more privileged than other towns in the neighbourhood. — *Brought down to hell.* Or, the abyss. This, as well as the foregoing expression, is plainly hyperbolical. The meaning is, that, from the enjoyment of the noblest privileges, it would, on account of its impenitence and unfaithfulness, be brought down to the lowest condition. The word translated *hell* is *Hades*, which means strictly the place of the departed, whether good or bad; it was represented by the Jews as situated beneath the earth. It has sometimes been translated *grave*. It here refers to the abject degradation to which Capernaum would be reduced, compared with its former distinguished opportunities, and not to any place of punishment in the future world. The prediction has been fulfilled; and even its situation is now lost, so completely has the town been effaced from the earth. The same laws of God's moral government are in action now; and the city or nation, which is exalted to heaven in point of privileges, will yet, if unfaithful and wicked, finally sink into oblivion, and its place be unknown, and its history sound like a fable. — *It would have remained until this day.* Its wickedness was the sole cause of its ruin.

24. See note on Matt. x. 15. — *More tolerable.* Scripture here confirms what is consonant to experience and reason, that punishment has its degrees. The greater the sin, the greater the misery. — What must be our condition, national or individual, temporal or eternal, if we shut our eyes against clearer

Digitized by Google

25 judgment, than for thee. —— At that time Jesus answered and
said: I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth,
because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent,
26 and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so

Gospel light than shone even upon Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, or if we darken it with the vapors of sin? "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

25–27. Compare Luke x. 21, 22, where the same expressions of Jesus' devout joy are uttered on the return of the Seventy.

25. *At that time.* As if to mark how soon Jesus reassured his fainting spirit, and turned from the saddening view of the inefficacy of his labors, to the most devout and grateful feelings. "To think of God was again to be revived, again to be his Christ, strong in hope." — *Answered and said.* Went on to say. He replied to no question, but proceeded to say, in addition to his foregoing remarks, what follows. — *I thank thee, O Father.* I make grateful acknowledgments to thee, or give glory. This is an ejaculatory prayer. — *Father* is the uniform title with which Jesus addresses the Deity. It argues no small advance in the Christian life, when his followers can with truth and sincerity, and not as a mere form, or from cold imitation, call God their Father. The conviction of God's paternal character is the strong-hold of goodness in the human heart. — *Lord of heaven and earth.* Universal sovereign, whose will there is none to dispute, above or below. The inquiry may be appropriately made here, How could the Saviour address this prayer to God, if he was himself God? If he was the Highest, why did he address a higher than himself? Did he thank himself? Or, if we adopt the doctrine of *two natures*, which by the way is not once mentioned in the Bible in any place, did one of his natures thank the other? Would that constitute worship? — *Because thou hast hid these things, &c.* That is, the truths of the Gospel. — *The wise and prudent.* The worldly wise, those wise in their own conceits. — *Hast revealed them unto babes*, i. e. to men of little learning, fame, or influence, but who were of innocent and docile dispositions. He elsewhere calls his disciples *little ones.* Matt. x. 42. In this verse is contained a peculiar idiom of the Hebrew language, an instance of which occurs in Rom. vi. 17. The cause of gratitude was not, as the sentence literally expresses it, that God had hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to babes; but because, having in his providence permitted them to be hidden from the learned and the famous, poets, orators, statesmen, and philosophers, he had communicated them to the meek and the childlike, to the unlearned carpenter and simple fisherman. The Scribes and Pharisees, puffed up with their learning, rejected the counsel of God, but the common people heard Jesus gladly. Preached by persons of such humble origin as himself and his Apostles, the Gospel would appear to be less indebted for its truth and success to any power, or learning, or wisdom of man, and more plainly and unequivocally to be the special revelation of Heaven. The Jews were accustomed to attribute every thing directly to the agency of God, even what was done by the will or instrumentality of man. Thus Jesus, in conformity to the usual mode of speech, repro-

Digitized by Google

it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me 27
of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father;
neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to
whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*. Come unto me all *ye* 28

sents God as hiding these things from the wise and prudent, by which we are not to understand that their unbelief was caused, but only permitted, by him, and that it was attributable to their own folly. — The latter clause of the verse may be illustrated by two quotations from the Talmuds. "From the time in which the temple was destroyed, wisdom was taken away from the prophets, and given to fools and children." "In the days of the Messiah, every species of wisdom, even the most profound, shall be revealed; and this even to children."

26. *So it seemed good in thy sight.* For many things this is the only satisfactory explanation, that they are as they are. When the speculations of philosophy can go no farther, it soothes the troubled mind to say, It is the will of our God. That will is so benignant, where we can understand it, that we can trust it, where it is inscrutable; being perfectly convinced, that, could we see the whole, we should see it advancing our welfare through darkness as well as light, through clouds and mysteries as well as in the plainest revelations and blessings.

27. *All things*, i. e. all things necessary to my mission and the salvation of mankind, and not strictly all things in the universe. All knowledge of God needful for my official work, as the rest of the verse shows; not all power and government. General terms are to be limited in interpretation by the connexion in which they stand. — *Are delivered unto me of my Father.* *By* my Father. Matt. xxviii. 18; John xvii. 2. A plain declaration of the subordination of the Son to the Father. — Though my religion is rejected by the wise and prudent, would seem to be his meaning, yet I can fall back and repose with joy on the assurance that God has given me this mission to perform, and all things adequate to its triumphant fulfilment. — *No man.* No one. — *Knoweth the Son but the Father.* *Know* here, as in many other cases, has the sense of being intimately acquainted with. No one knows the Son as the Son, i. e. in his peculiar and glorious relation to the Father, but the Father. The Gospel was so far in advance of mankind, and even of the Jews, as a religious people, that no one, not even his disciples, fully understood and sympathized with him in his sublime purposes. He could look to Heaven alone for support. But he was not solitary, for the Father was with him, and understood him and his errand into the world. — *Neither knoweth any man,*—any one — *the Father, save the Son, &c.* So, on the other hand, the Father is not known in his full glory, except to his Son, and those of a like spirit with him, who have been enlightened by him in relation to the character of the Father. — *Will reveal him.* Instead of *him* read *them*, that is, both the Father and the Son. The Son reveals himself and his Father, reveals his Father in himself. The sense of the whole is, that the Father has given him a full commission and knowledge in relation to the salvation of mankind, and that none but the Father and Son, and those who are instructed by the Gospel, can enter completely into their plans with regard to the

Digitized by Google

29 that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take
my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly
30 in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke
is easy, and my burden is light.

reformation of the world. Spiritual things must be spiritually known. Only the godlike can comprehend the godlike.

28–30. This paragraph grows naturally out of the preceding verses. He had been speaking with a thankful exultation of the commission given him by the Father for the salvation of mankind. He now invites all, but especially the wearied and overburdened, to come and experience the life, liberty, and bliss of this salvation. His mind had been raised so high in the contemplation of his mission, that he breaks out into a beautiful apostrophe to the children of toil and sorrow, to come to him and experience the blessings of the Gospel. The imperative mode is here used less in the sense of command than of earnest supplication. O come unto me.

28. *Come unto me.* Not physically, but spiritually. Those come unto Christ, who obey and love him. John vi. 35, vii. 37. — *All ye that labor and are heavy laden.* All without distinction are invited. Those who labored under the encumbrances of the Mosaic ritual, those who were heavy-laden with human traditions, those who groaned under the slavery of sin, and those who were oppressed with the nameless cares and trials of human existence, were addressed in this moving entreaty. Whatever be the toil or the suffering, rest is promised, on condition of going unto Jesus. — *I will give you rest.* Jesus would supersede burdensome ceremonies, with a simple, spiritual faith and practice. Acts xv. 10; Gal. v. i. He would overthrow the oppressive commandments of men, and vindicate in their power the laws of God. He would extract the sting from sorrow, sickness, and death, and give rest and gladness to the sons and daughters of grief. When the soul is directed to Jesus it finds peace, as the disturbed magnetic needle, pointing to its pole of attraction, straightway subsides, and becomes still. The knowledge of God which he communicates calms the agitated soul. The burdens he imposes, so far from wearying, renew the strength. The duties he enjoins promote present and future happiness. Here is found

> "A sovereign balm for every wound,
> A cordial for our fears."

29. *Take my yoke, &c.* A common figure. To follow or obey one is to wear his yoke; a metaphor from husbandry, to illustrate religion. The sense is without dispute, — Submit to my instruction, learn of me the truth of God, and obey it. — *For I am meek and lowly in heart.* Jesus would be a mild, condescending teacher and guide, in contrast with the haughty Scribes and Pharisees, who treated the people at large with contempt; who put upon them burdens heavier than they could bear, and would not so much as touch them with one of their fingers. Matt. xxiii. 4; Luke xi. 46. — *Ye shall find rest.* Fulfil the condition, and you shall receive the reward. — *Unto your souls.* Jesus does not promise his followers exemption from the common, outward, physical ills of life. But he does promise that they shall have rest, where rest is of most value, in the *soul.* There shall be peace in the heart. In the virtues of the

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

The Reasonings of Jesus with the Scribes and Pharisees, and his Rebukes of their Wickedness.

AT that time Jesus went on the sabbath-day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw *it*, they 2

Christian character, in purity, self-denial, piety, and mercy, there is a quiet and tranquil happiness truly divine. The soul feels a conscious dignity and serene elevation, as if raised above the storms that sweep this lower world. "There is in man a higher than love of happiness; he can do without happiness, and instead thereof find blessedness." Let not the good grieve, if they have little of the gold, or honors, or pleasures of this world. Our Father does not pay his faithful ones in things of so perishable a nature, but in the higher rewards of the spirit itself.

30. *For my yoke is easy, &c.* The Christian religion makes none but reasonable requirements, and imposes none but necessary restraints. It is free from the burdensome ceremonial of the Jews. It requires no arduous pilgrimages like Mahometanism, nor the bloody sacrifices and human offerings of pagan idolatry. It gives free course and noble gratifications to all the high, enduring faculties of the soul, and enjoins self-denial only in things hurtful, and where it brings joys far deeper and richer than those of any sensual or worldly nature. The Christian has found it to be so by experience. The yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light to him. Take the whole checkered course of life through, and he has discovered only one thing suited alike to all states and all changes, and that is Religion; tempering and enhancing pleasures, soothing troubles, cheering difficulties, enriching poverty, smoothing the pillow of sickness, and glorifying the bed of death; and in all giving a peace that passeth understanding.

We have probably read these last paragraphs of the chapter so many times in a monotonous mood and the sluggish acquiescence of habit, that we have not considered the commanding and awful strain, as of the summons to judgment, fitted to make every heart quake, with which the responsibility of the hearers of Christ is sounded forth, or the inexpressible sweetness and winning grace with which he calls on the wearied, suffering, and sinful to come to him and to forget their woes in the bosom of his love. It is a passage to startle all the fears, and thrill with ecstasy all the hopes, that inhabit the human heart; a passage to be read with deep awe, with tears of penitence, and tears of joy. Muse upon it in thy heart till the fire burns.

CHAP. XII.

1–8. Mark ii. 23–28; Luke vi. 1–5.

1. *At that time.* About that time. Luke specifies the time, though obscurely, as "the second Sabbath after the first," which is conjectured by Carpenter to mean the first Sabbath after Pentecost, in our month of May. — *Sabbath-day.* Corresponding to our Saturday. — *The corn.* The fields of grain, probably barley or wheat. Indian corn was unknown till modern times. All kinds of grain were formerly called *corn.* — *An hungered.* An old English expression for *hungry.* — *The*

Digitized by Google

said unto him: Behold thy disciples do that which is not law-
3 ful to do upon the sabbath-day. But he said unto them: Have
ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and
4 they that were with him? how he entered into the house of
God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him
to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the

---

ears of corn. The heads of grain. Luke adds, they rubbed them in their hands, for the purpose, no doubt, of shelling out the kernels from the heads. — *Eat*. This they were allowed to do by the law of Moses, Deut. xxiii. 25, but they were not to reap, or carry any away.

2. *Thy disciples do that which is not lawful*, i. e. do that which is forbidden by law. What they held to be forbidden was not the plucking and eating of the grain, but doing it on the Sabbath. Moses had enjoined abstinence from labor on that day. Ex. xx. 10, xxxv. 2, 3; Numb. xv. 32–36. And these rigid formalists carried his laws, relative to the day of rest, to such extremes, as to forbid even works of necessity and mercy. One teacher held that attendance on the sick was unlawful on that day. The following passage occurs in one of the Rabbinical books, which may explain the opinions of the time, and illustrate the text before us; "He that reaps on the Sabbath, though never so little, is guilty. And to pluck the ears of corn is a kind of reaping; and whosoever plucks any thing from the springing of his own fruit is guilty under the name of a reaper." The Pharisees nominally directed the charge of Sabbath-breaking against the disciples, but in reality they aimed their blow at Jesus himself. He answered it in this light. They appeared to have been actuated on this and other occasions, when the observance of the Sabbath was in question, by a union of superstition for outward ceremonies, and of personal hostility to Christ. See Matt. xii. 10; Luke xiii. 14, xiv. 1–3; John v. 16, ix. 16. They gladly seized hold of any pretext to blacken his character. And his lofty independence, though tempered by gentleness and prudence, gave them frequent opportunities of misconstruing his words and actions.

3. *What David did*. Jesus defends himself and his disciples, first, by the example of David; an authority which the Jews very much respected. The history of the case referred to is contained in 1 Sam. xxi. 3–6. — *An hungered*. Hungry.

4. *How he entered into the house of God*. David seems, from the narration, not actually to have entered the house or tabernacle, — the temple had not yet been built, — but to have met the priest elsewhere, probably in the court of the tabernacle. — *The shew-bread*. Lev. xxiv. 5–9. This bread was so called because it was placed on a table in the tabernacle, before the presence of God, as there manifested. It was the *shown* bread. Twelve fresh loaves, "an emblem of the offerings of the Twelve Tribes," were put there weekly; the old bread being removed, and eaten by the priests alone. David, in his extremity, and by the permission of the priest, partook of this holy bread, contrary to the law, and gave it to his companions. But he was justified by the necessity of the case. He had been pursued by Saul, and had no time to provide for his journey. In violating therefore the letter of the law,

Digitized by Google

priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the 5
sabbath-days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and
are blameless? But I say unto you, that in this place is *one* 6
greater than the temple. But if ye had known what *this* mean- 7
eth: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," ye would not
have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord 8
even of the sabbath-day.

---

he might be said not to have violated its living spirit. So the disciples were justified in their seeming transgression by the necessity of nature. We may suppose, perhaps, that Jesus does not admit that his disciples did break the Sabbath by plucking and eating of the grain, but that he reasoned with the Pharisees on their own ground, as the readiest way to silence their calumny.

5. *In the law*, i. e. of Moses. Numb. xxviii. 9, 10. — *Profane the sabbath and are blameless.* It was a Jewish saying, "There is no sabbatism at all in the temple." The labor of the priests was as much as on other days, in slaying and preparing, and offering up the victims. Yet they were blameless, because it was a law that sacrifices should be offered on the Sabbath. Thus the disciples were excusable, because, although they did that which according to the mere letter of the law might be called *work*, yet they obeyed the higher law of self-preservation. What the priests did in the temple, my disciples may do here. Thus far he has justified himself and them by the necessity of the case, and the example of David.

6. *Is one greater.* The original is in the neuter gender. *Something* greater than the temple. Jesus thus modestly expressed his claim to superiority. *Greater than the temple* may mean greater than those who serve in the temple, or greater than that system on account of which the temple was erected. He had power to supersede that system and its laws, and establish one less ceremonial. What he allowed his disciples to do was justifiable, though contrary to the traditions of the elders. Their health and life were of more consequence than external observances. His second justication, therefore, is drawn from the fact of his superiority to Moses.

7. *I will have mercy and not sacrifice.* Hos. vi. 6; 1 Sam. xv. 22. A Hebrew idiom. The sense is not that God did not require sacrifice, but that he preferred acts of righteousness to mere external observances. He looks at the heart rather than at the hand. The verse may be paraphrased thus: "If you had considered the superiority of right affections over outward ceremonies, you would not have condemned the necessary violation of a ritual law, or perhaps a mere tradition." This is the third answer of Jesus to the accusation of the Pharisees.

8. *The Son of Man is Lord*, or Master, *&c.* By *the Son of Man* we are to understand Christ himself, as in verse 32. See note on Matt. viii. 20. Jesus was authorized to establish a system of religion, under which the Sabbath would be changed from a day of physical rest to one of spiritual awakening; from a day of offering material sacrifices to one of worshipping God in spirit and truth. In his church also the Sabbath has been transferred, in commemoration of his resurrection, from the seventh to the first day of the week. He

Digitized by Google

9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their syna-
10 gogue. And, behold, there was a man which had *his* hand withered. And they asked him, saying: Is it lawful to heal on
11 the sabbath-days? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them: What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day,
12 will he not lay hold on it, and lift *it* out? How much then is a man better than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do well on

---

could therefore grant a freedom to his disciples unknown to the scrupulous Pharisees. This was his fourth justification. — Mark adds, ii. 27, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;" which signified that the day would be truly kept, if made subservient to man's greatest good.

9 – 16. See Mark iii. 1 – 6, 12, Luke vi. 6 – 11.

9. *He went into their synagogue.* This was, according to Luke vi. 6, on another Sabbath-day. The two narratives are introduced together because they relate to the same subject. We see that by studying the parallel passages of the Evangelists we gain a more complete knowledge of the history of our Lord.

10. *Which had his hand withered.* Who had a withered hand. This was probably a species of palsy, of which there were several kinds; but which is never suddenly cured by natural means. Luke mentions that it was the right hand. — *Is it lawful, &c.* It had been decided by some of the Jewish teachers, as we learn from their books, that it was not lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day, except in case of imminent danger. — *That they might accuse him.* They asked questions not for information, but for accusation. How malignant must that hatred have been, which the quiet of the Sabbath did not mitigate; which followed Jesus in his circuits of doing good, only to slander and accuse, and which converted his acts of mercy into crimes of the deepest dye! Whilst, on the other hand, with what wisdom, patience, magnanimity, and calmness, did the divine Teacher meet all his difficulties! Who can look upon him and not love so noble a being? Who can love and not imitate him?

11. *Pit.* A cistern or well, at which cattle were watered. The Jews had carried their notions to such an extravagant length as to question whether it were lawful to rescue an animal from danger on the Sabbath day; but it had been decided in the affirmative, as we learn from the Rabbinical books. "If a beast fall into a ditch, or into a pool of water, let the owner bring him food in that place, if he can; but if he cannot, let him bring clothes and litters and bear up the beast, whence if he can come up, let him come up," &c. Jesus would therefore justify his conduct upon grounds of their own admission, and by their actual practice in relation to the inferior creation.

12. *How much then is a man better than a sheep!* Of how much more importance and value. Jesus intimates, that the restoration of the withered hand of a human being was of more consequence than the life of an animal; and as the Jews admitted that the one might be rescued, so they must also admit that the other might be healed. — *It is*

Digitized by Google

the sabbath-days. Then saith he to the man: Stretch forth 13
thine hand. And he stretched *it* forth; and it was restored
whole, like as the other. Then the Pharisees went out, and 14
held a council against him, how they might destroy him. ——
But when Jesus knew *it*, he withdrew himself from thence; 15
and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them all,
and charged them that they should not make him known; 16

---

lawful to do well, &c. To perform beneficent acts. We learn from this that moral laws are superior to ceremonial institutions. Our Lord reasoned with the Jews upon their own maxims and conduct; for even they allowed that the Sabbath did not free them from the obligations of mercy. Strange indeed would it be, if that day, set apart as sacred to God, could be lawfully spent in doing evil, or neglecting works of mercy.

13. *Stretch forth thine hand.* Jesus, having answered their insidious question, performs the miracle. By his command to stretch forth the helpless, palsied hand, he puts the faith of the man to the proof. — *He stretched it forth, &c.* He has such confidence in Jesus as to lead him to obey implicitly this command, although apparently incapable of it. Where there is a disposition to obey, there is strength given sufficient for our duty. Faith recognises no impossibilities. — The complete and sudden recovery of the palsied hand is a proof of miraculous power. The palsy was a disease not admitting of a speedy cure. Jesus exculpated his disciples on the previous occasion by the plea of necessity; at this time he justified himself by the plea that he performed a deed of benevolence.

14. *The Pharisees went out.* The closeness of our Lord's reasoning, and his independence, had exasperated these malicious men, so that they go out immediately to plot his destruction. The tumult of their passions showed how ill they were qualified to discuss moral questions. Stung with envy at his popularity, and enraged at his superiority in word and deed, they already began to lay those plans which finally resulted in his crucifixion. — *Held a council.* Not a formal assembly; the sense rather is, they counselled together. Mark adds, that the Herodians also joined with them, probably a political party attached to the reigning sovereign, and opposed to any change in the state, as the Pharisees were to any in the church. — *Him*, i. e. Jesus, not the man who is last mentioned.

15–21. See Mark iii. 7–12.

15. *When Jesus knew it, he withdrew.* When he had learned it, or when it came to his knowledge, he withdrew, as Mark states, to the sea, i. e. the Sea of Galilee. He also mentions from what places the multitudes came; and that he gave directions to have a small vessel in waiting to receive him on account of the crowd. Jesus withdraws from danger less on account of himself than because the objects of his mission would be defeated by his premature death. — *Great multitudes.* Notwithstanding the opposition of their teachers, the great mass of the people welcomed his instructions and confided in his miraculous power. — *Healed them all.* This is one of those universal expressions, that require to be limit-

Digitized by Google

17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the
18 prophet, saying: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen,
my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my
spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles.
19 He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his
20 voice in the streets; a bruised reed shall he not break, and
smoking flax shall he not quench; till he send forth judgment
21 unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust."

---

ed by the nature of the subject. He healed all who sought to be healed.

16. *Should not make him known.* See note on Matt. viii. 4. This command arose from the wish to avoid any tumult of the people, who might desire to make him king, and also to shun his foes, who were plotting against his life.

17. *That.* Implying that the preceding circumstances rendered the quotation from Isaiah appropriate. — *Esaias.* Isa. xlii. 1 – 4. The prophet seems to have had in view the character of the Messiah or some great deliverer. The Evangelist applies the description to the present conduct of Jesus. See note on Matt. i. 22.

18. The quotation made by Matt. agrees in substance, though not in all points of phraseology, with the passage in Isaiah. It describes the mind and humane character of Jesus, who, though he did not distrust his cause or his God, yet gave way before his enemies to avoid their violence. Because his kingdom was not of this world, he would not defend it as the kingdoms of this world are defended. His weapons were spiritual, his warfare divine. He used the mildest means in spreading his religion; means, however, so powerful that they would eventually prevail over all opposition. — *Is well pleased.* Such was the testimony repeatedly given of Christ. Matt. iii. 17; John xii. 28. — *I will put my spirit upon him.* John iii. 34. It is said of Jesus that "God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him." — *Judgment to the Gentiles.* A law; meaning a system of religion, which was to be preached not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles.

19. Images of peace. He would not be clamorous or violent, like a warrior, but gentle and meek, shunning rather than seeking publicity.

20. *Bruised reed.* The reed was used as an emblem of weakness. Ezek. xxix. 6; 2 Kings xviii. 21. — *Smoking flax*, i. e. the wick of an expiring lamp. The general meaning of these figures is, that his conduct would be characterized by meekness and kindness; that he would not crush the contrite and feeble, but encourage the faintest aspirations after virtue; and that he would not seek applause. Such was in fact the character of our Lord. He was tender to the weakness of his disciples, forgiving towards his enemies, and cherished the first symptoms of penitence in the transgressor. He courted not "the noise of boasting, nor the loud reports of fame." — *Send forth judgment unto victory.* Till he make his law or religion victorious. In the exercise of benevolence and meekness, he would intrench his Gospel in the hearts of men. Some understand that reference is here made to the judgments that befell the Jewish people, and the coming

Digitized by Google

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb; and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said: Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said: This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them: Every kingdom divided

22 23 24 25

---

of the Son of Man in his glory. Matt. xxiv. 30.

21. *In his name.* In him shall the Gentiles trust. The most extensive benefits were to follow from the Gospel. In Jesus, the descendant of Abraham, all the nations of the world were to be blessed. Gentile as well as Jew was to be admitted to the privileges and hopes of his religion. We witness at the present day the fulfilment of his prediction.

22–32. See Mark iii. 19–30; Luke xi. 14–23.

22. *Possessed with a devil.* With a demon; a demoniac. See note, Matt. iv. 24. — *Blind and dumb.* The individual was probably afflicted with insanity, one symptom of which is taciturnity, and in some cases blindness. — *Insomuch.* So that.

23. *The people were amazed.* As they believed in the reality of possession by evil spirits, they were astonished beyond measure at the cure of the demoniacs. — *Is not this the son of David?* According to some commentators the negative particle should be omitted, and the question would read, *Is this the son of David?* This phrase is usually considered equivalent to, *Is this the Messiah?* For it was expected that the Messiah would descend from the house of David. See note on Matt. ix. 27. "This inference was drawn by the common people, and not by the proud and haughty Pharisees. It is not uncommon that the plain common sense of the candid but unlearned sees the true beauty and meaning of the Bible, while men filled with pride, and science, falsely so called, are blinded."

24. *Fellow.* This expression of contempt is not contained in the original, but was inserted by the translators, as is indicated by the Italic letters. — *Beelzebub.* The margin reads *Beelzebul.* See note on Matt. x. 25. — *Devils* should be rendered *demons.* The people were evidently deeply impressed with the miraculous power of Christ. The Pharisees feared the loss of their influence, and they resorted to this unjustifiable method to destroy the confidence of the people in Jesus, catching at the words of the relations of Jesus, that "he was beside himself," or mad, Mark iii. 21. They could not deny the exercise of a superhuman power, but, to frustrate its influence, they attributed it to an evil being. This argued a stubbornness that would yield to no evidence whatever, since it perverted the highest proofs of divine authority by the malicious insinuation that he himself was mad, or possessed with Beelzebub.

25. *Knew their thoughts, &c.* He had a spiritual insight into the hearts of men. — *Said unto them.* Jesus uses reasoning, and not invective, even with his most malignant enemies; an example worthy of all imitation. He first argues against them from the absurdity of their charge; laying down the general rule, that every community, large or small, subsists by its union, and

Digitized by Google

against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house
26 divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out
Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his king-
27 dom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom
do your children cast *them* out? Therefore they shall be your
28 judges. But if I cast out devils by the spirit of God, then the
29 kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else, how can one enter

then, verse 26, applying the rule to the case in hand; from premises that they would admit, he draws a conclusion subversive of their accusation. — *House*, i. e. Family.

26. *Satan.* The original signifies an *adversary*, but afterwards had the more general meanings of *tempter* and *accuser*. Satan is a general, Beelzebub a specific term. The former is often used as the principle, or perhaps the personification of all evil. Jesus addresses to them an *argumentum ad hominem*, or takes them upon their own ground. If your calumny is true, the evil one is fighting against himself, and overthrowing his own kingdom; he must then have less than human wisdom. As Jesus laid claim to be a divine teacher, we have a natural curiosity to ascertain how his teaching and his claim corresponded, and we always discover in his conversations the traces of the most eminent wisdom, autographs of the divine spirit. We meet with constant intrinsic proofs of the truth of the history and divinity of our Master.

27. *Your children cast them out?* Sons, disciples, or followers; those who had been instructed under the care of the doctors of the law. Jesus reasons, in the second place, against their charge, from the case of their own exorcists. It must be borne in mind that our Saviour does not assert that they actually did cast out demons. But he argues with them on their own premises. He and the exorcists were on the same footing; and if it was alleged that the one cast out demons through the power of demons, the same must be admitted of the other also. If I use magical arts, do not your disciples likewise? But if your disciples cast them out by a divine power, may I not be authorized in the same manner? We learn that there were exorcists among the Jews from Luke ix. 49, Acts xix. 13, also from the Jewish historian, Josephus, and the early Christian Fathers. They pretended to exorcise demons in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Solomon was alleged to have been the author of this art. The Egyptians and the heathen borrowed from the Jews the forms of adjuration used in their magical practices. — *Therefore they shall be your judges.* They will convict you of slander and calumny; for they show your inconsistency. The opinion you form therefore concerning them will determine what decision you are to make respecting me.

28. *The Spirit of God.* Luke xi. 20, has, "the finger of God." The idea is the same. Jesus worked miracles by the divine power or co-operation. Having foiled the accusation of his enemies, he draws the irresistible conclusion, that, as he performed works of divine energy, he gave conclusive evidence of a divine mission. — *The kingdom of God is come unto you.* Since he bore proofs of divine authority, he was to be received as a divine messenger and teacher.

Digitized by Google

into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. He 30 that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad. Wherefore I say unto you, all 31 manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven

29. He continues his argument. He had shown above that he acted independently of Beelzebub and Satan. He now proves that he must necessarily be superior to them, else he could not have expelled demons. He brings an illustration from common life. The robber cannot plunder a house or castle until he has first overcome or bound its owner. So, unless Jesus were more powerful than Satan, he could not subvert his kingdom. — *Spoil his goods — his house.* Despoil, or plunder his plate, treasures, or furniture of his house.

30. *He that is not with me is against me.* A proverbial expression, which Jesus employs still farther to refute their charge. He had shown, by expelling the demons, that he was not with, or on the side of Beelzebub, but against him. In Mark ix. 40; Luke ix. 50, the converse of this proverb is used: "He that is not against us is on our part." Both are applicable and true, according to different circumstances. The proverb in Mark and Luke has been thus paraphrased: "He that does not make use of my name to injure me must be friendly to me." — *He that gathereth not with me, &c.* This is another proverbial phrase, borrowed from rural life. He who assists not the shepherd in collecting his flock, or the husbandman in gathering his harvest, would, if he labored at all, hinder him in his object. The application is the same with that of the preceding expression. Let it be borne in mind that Jesus, throughout this whole passage, is reasoning with the Pharisees on their own ground, and not on his.

31. *Wherefore.* This word has reference to the foregoing reasoning, equivalent to *so then*, in view of your calumny and the refutation it has received. — *I say unto you.* In verses 25, 26, Jesus had shown the inconsistency of their charge; in verse 27, how it would operate against themselves; in verse 29, his superiority to Satan; and in verse 30, his hostility to him. He now goes on to describe the criminality of their accusation, and its awful consequences to themselves. — *Blasphemy.* Calumny, reviling, or, as it is expressed in the next verse, *speaking against.* — *Shall be*, i. e. may or can be. All kinds of sin may be forgiven unto men, except the sin which he now specifies. — *Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.* What this sin was is evident from the tenor of the antecedent passage; but that we may not mistake as to the nature of this offence, it is distinctly declared in Mark iii. 30, that it was, "because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." Their sin consisted in blaspheming or defaming that Holy Spirit or power of God, which coöperated with him and enabled him to perform his wonderful works. They were instigated to this crime by their envy of his power and popularity, and the fear of losing their own; as is casually suggested in one instance, where they said, "If we let him alone, all men will believe on him." John xi. 48. Their object, in charging

Digitized by Google

32 unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in

him with an alliance with the prince of demons, was to undermine the confidence of the people in him and destroy his influence.

32. *Speaketh a word against the Son of Man.* Our Lord in this verse reiterates what he had said in the last, with the addition of a comparison, to place the heinousness of their offence in bolder relief. He says, Whosoever speaks against me personally may be forgiven. Thus the Jews had objected to his humble birth, had called him a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, a Galilean, a Nazarene, and a Samaritan, as terms of contempt. They had brought many grave but groundless accusations against his conduct and his character. But all these, he says, are pardonable sins, compared with the one of which they are now guilty. — *Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, &c.* We have seen in the previous verse what constituted this daring transgression, viz. attributing Jesus' beneficent deeds to an evil agency. This was more than to speak against Jesus himself. It was impiety against God. It was shutting the eyes and hardening the heart against the mightiest proofs and brightest manifestations of God's Spirit and power. It was rejecting the last evidence, as it would seem, by which God could give testimony that he had commissioned his Son to declare his will. — *It shall not be forgiven him.* Two modes of interpreting this passage have been defended. One literal, that the sin in question is strictly unpardonable, whether in the present or the future state. The other, grounded upon the fact that our Saviour spoke a free and popular language, and used the idioms of his nation, supposes that he declared the extreme enormity of the sin, and the consequent difficulty of its being forgiven. Thus God is represented as saying, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," a Hebrew idiom to express his preference of mercy to sacrifice. Our Saviour says, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven," declaring the extreme difficulty, but not the absolute impossibility of that event. So the text in hand is designed to give a deep impression of the malignity of assigning the very works of God to the power of Satan, and how hardly so heinous a perversity could be forgiven. The latter mode seems the most rational, for we are informed of no crime or transgression, unless it be this, which does not come within the reach of divine mercy. And we know that Jesus still labored and taught amongst the impenitent Jews, and that he prayed for their forgiveness upon the cross. It would appear therefore that the reason, why this sin was so difficult to be forgiven, was not any indisposition on the part of God to forgive, but the reluctance of the offender to repent. If repented of, this, like every other transgression, would be pardoned. But he who would not believe, when such evidence was presented, as the works wrought by the divine Spirit, was clearly in such a stubborn, perverse, and determined state of opposition; he was so resolved to suppress the honest convictions of his own heart, and to wear a front of hypocrisy and defiance, that there was little hope or probability that he would repent, and cherish a bet-

Digitized by Google

this world, neither in the *world* to come. Either make the 33
tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt,
and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by *his* fruit. O 34

ter mind, and little therefore that he would be forgiven. He could not be pardoned, because he would not ask for mercy, would not acknowledge his sin, but persist in it, would not fulfil the conditions of forgiveness, viz. repentance and reformation. Such a fell spirit could not hope for pity, because it spurned it; and as long as it continued hardened, it must, from the very nature of man, and the laws of God, continue unforgiven. The fear of committing the unpardonable sin has always haunted many tender consciences, and mingled in the terrible fancies of insanity. The particular sin, however, of which Christ here speaks cannot now occur. But still a similar perverse and wilful state of mind, and a determination to reject the claims of religion, or of the purest form of religion, against the clearest evidence and the strongest convictions of the mind, a stubborn intention to repress the relentings of the heart, may now expose one to the doom here pronounced. Not, surely, because God is not ready to pardon his child, though his sins be as scarlet, but because his child will not fulfil those conditions of penitence and amendment without which there can be no forgiveness. — *Neither in this world, neither in the world to come.* *World* often means, in the New Testament, *age* or *dispensation*. Wakefield accordingly paraphrases the sentence thus: — "Though the Christian religion is a dispensation of mercy, this sin shall no more be forgiven by the laws of the Gospel than it is by the law of Moses," under which the punishment was death. Lev. xxiv. 16. Others suppose that it means literally neither in time nor in eternity. The best word to express it is, perhaps, *never*, Mark iii. 29, for this is used in Hebrew idioms with a general and indefinite sense. At least we well know that the sin would never be pardoned as long as the sinner continued impenitent, though it were for ever in the most literal sense; for the Bible assures us that there is an eternal connexion between sin and misery, and one of the greatest elements of the latter is, the state of not being forgiven by God.

33. *Either make the tree good, &c.* Two methods of interpreting this verse are proposed, according as it is connected with the foregoing or with the succeeding passage. If with the preceding, the sense is, — Reconcile me and my works; either make it appear that the tree is bad and the fruit consequently bad, or else admit that the tree is good and the fruit also. Be consistent with yourselves; for there is as much connexion between deeds and the motives which prompt them, as between the nature of the tree and the nature of its fruit. If it is a good work to cast out demons, acknowledge me to be good; or if you contend that I am evil, then to cast out demons must be evil likewise. The other way of explanation is, that the words are connected with the succeeding verses, and signify that the Pharisees ought not to be guilty of the inconsistency of evil conduct and pious pretensions. Better be openly base, than hypocritically good. There is, however, no particular objection to supposing that he referred both to himself and to the Pharisees, since the rule of judgment he proposes would be as effectual to convict them of wicked-

Digitized by Google

generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth
35 speaketh. A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil
36 treasure, bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account
37 thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.
38 Then certain of the Scribes and of the Pharisees answered,

ness, as it would to vindicate himself against their charges. Matt. vii. 16–20.

34. *O generation of vipers.* Brood of vipers, see note on Matt. iii. 7, also xxiii. 33. This most venomous reptile is used as an emblem of malice and wickedness. — *How can ye, being evil, &c.* A question requiring a strong negative answer. They could not, being evil at heart, speak otherwise than evil of Christ and his works. — *Out of the abundance, &c.* Out of *the overflowing* of the heart; a proverbial expression, implying that as a man speaketh so is he, as a general rule, without denying that there may be hypocritical *words*.

35. A repetition and enlargement of the foregoing sentiment. — *The good treasure* consists of good feelings and principles, and *the evil treasure* the reverse. Unless they had been filled with corrupt and censorious passions, they would not have thus slandered our Lord. Griesbach leaves out of the text the words *of the heart*, as they are not found in the greater part of the earlier manuscripts and versions.

36. *But I say unto you.* A phrase frequently used by Jesus when about to say something of great importance. — *Idle word.* Corresponding to *vain words*, in the Old Testament. *Idle* here means more than useless; it signifies calumnious, false, or pernicious. Such words the Pharisees had been speaking against Christ, and he warns them that, however trifling the offence may seem in their own apprehension, it is one for which they are answerable at the bar of God. — *In the day of judgment.* In *a* day of judgment, for the article *the* is not in the original. They would be brought to judgment and retribution at some future time, whenever that time should come.

37. A more distinct declaration of the idea of the preceding verse, announcing that men are responsible for their words, as well as their deeds, and rightly too, since words are often most powerful deeds, both in their origin and consequences. The destiny of nations has sometimes depended upon one word of a frail mortal. — *Justified.* Acquitted. — *And* should be rendered *or*, as the same individual could not be both justified *and* condemned. It is not intended, that words would form the only criterion of judgment, but that they would enter into it as an important element. Since we are, therefore, answerable for our speech, how strictly ought we to guard our lips, that no profane, or false, or calumnious word should ever escape therefrom, to rise up against us in the final retribution!

38–42. Luke xi. 16, 29–32.

38. *Answered.* That is, went on

Digitized by Google

saying: Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he an- 39
swered and said unto them: An evil and adulterous generation
seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it,
but the sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three 40
days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of

to say. — *Master.* Should be translated Teacher. Luke adds, that they sought a sign, "tempting him," or wishing to put his power to the proof. — *Would see a sign.* Dan. vii. 13; Matt. xvi. 1; Mark viii. 11; Luke xi. 16; John vi. 30; 1 Cor. i. 22. Luke states, that what they wanted was "a sign from heaven." They demanded more than an earthly sign, than a miracle of healing the sick, or curing the blind; they desired a sign from heaven, some token or portent from the clouds or sky. As the ancient Jewish prophets had exhibited signs from heaven, — Moses calling down manna and quails; Samuel producing a storm; Elijah sending fire and rain, — so the Scribes and Pharisees now demand from the Messiah some similar manifestation of his power. "It may be gathered from the Jewish writings that an idea was entertained that the Messiah, when he came, would give some peculiar token, or signal, some extraordinary display of power, — a luminous appearance in the heavens, perhaps, for it is not distinctly defined, — which should be a credential of his authority, to point him out to the people as the Messiah beyond the possibility of mistake. The demand for a sign, therefore, was equivalent to a demand for evidence that he was such a personage as was expected. But Jesus did not present himself to the nation as a military leader. Evidence, therefore, was demanded, of which the very nature of the case did not admit, and which he could not give." — *Furness.*

39. *Adulterous.* The force of this epithet is doubtful. Probably it is a figure of speech to represent the unfaithfulness of the Jewish people to God; for their relation to him is often described figuratively as that of the marriage state. The sense would be, a wicked and apostate generation. — *There shall no sign be given to it, &c.* No other sign than he had already given. He had no new prodigy more astonishing or convincing than the miracles he had already performed. If he should exhibit some sign from heaven, it either would not overcome their credulity, or, if it did, it would only encourage their false and worldly notions of the expected Deliverer. Wonders from the sky might appropriately grace the advent of a hero; but miracles of beneficence were more in harmony with the Prince of Peace. — *The sign of the prophet Jonas.* The Jews demanded a sign from heaven. Jesus promised them a sign from the earth, even the sign of Jonah, whose humiliation would best represent the death and resurrection of the Son of Man.

40. *Whale.* Jonah i. and ii. The word in the original signifies any large fish or sea-monster. Jesus uses the story of Jonah as an illustration, not as an authority, or prophecy, or type. As the account was familiar to the Jews, it would strikingly illustrate the subject in hand, so that they would remember the application long afterwards. — *The Son of Man.* See note, Matt. viii. 20. — *Three days and three nights.* According to the Jewish

Digitized by Google

Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.
42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this

---

mode of computing time, a part of a day was reckoned as the whole; compare 2 Chron. x. 5, and 12; Esther iv. 16, with v. 1. Thus our Lord, though buried on Friday evening and raised on Sunday morning, was said to have been three days and three nights in the tomb, because he was there one whole day and parts of two others. — *In the heart of the earth.* A Hebrew phrase for *in* the earth. Christ's greatest sign was to be his resurrection from the dead. Observe here, that he gives the first intimation of his death, and its succeeding events, and makes a specific prediction, which, by its exact fulfilment, vindicated his prophetic power and divine authority.

41. *Nineveh.* The capital of Assyria, one of the most ancient cities in the world. Gen. x. 11. It was situated on the banks of the Tigris, and its circuit was three days' journey. Its walls were 100 feet high, and three chariots could drive abreast upon the top; and at intervals were placed 1500 towers, twice the height of the walls. After passing through various fortunes, and being in the possession of different conquerors, its vast walls and palaces were so utterly destroyed, that the site of the city can now with difficulty be recognised. This appears the more probable, when we consider that its edifices were constructed of sunburnt bricks, which by long exposure to the weather crumble back into the bitumen from which they were made; and thus this splendid city in the course of ages would present, as it actually does present, only a mass of undistinguishable ruins. — *Shall rise in judgment.* A judicial phrase, borrowed from the proceedings of Jewish and Roman courts, in which it was usual for witnesses to stand up while giving their evidence. Mark xiv. 57; Acts vi. 13. — *Shall condemn it.* Similar modes of speech to those occurring in this and the next verse are found in Ezek. xvi. 51, 52; Rom. ii. 27, and Heb. xi. 7. The Ninevites, though a heathen nation and grossly wicked, repented and reformed at the preaching of the prophet. Jonah iii. But the Jews, though they had been favored with great religious privileges, and the knowledge of the true God, were so stiff-necked and rebellious that they would not repent at the preaching of the Son of God, though he proved his divine authority by the most astonishing and beneficent miracles. The heathen people therefore showed a better disposition than the children of Israel, and, by their readiness to obey, condemned the unbelieving and disobedient Scribes and Pharisees. — *A greater than Jonas is here,* i. e. Jesus Christ. The Greek words are, *something greater is here.* The gender is neuter. A more delicate and modest expression than to declare directly that *he* was greater. Or perhaps designed to refer to the higher character of his miracles and doctrines, rather than to any personal greatness.

42. *The queen of the south.* Or, of Sheba, the chief city of Arabia Felix. 1 Kings x. 1–13. She came from a part of Arabia south

Digitized by Google

generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. —— When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith: I will return into my house, from whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and

from Judea. — *In the judgment.* Or, in the place of judgment. — *Uttermost parts of the earth.* An expression for *a great distance*, and not literally the most remote part of the world. Arabia was the most distant country in the south known to the Jews. She took great pains to hear the wisdom of Solomon by travelling a long journey. But the Jews would not listen to one far greater than Solomon, though he preached among them. They were condemned, therefore, by a comparison with the heathen queen, as being less desirous of wisdom, and unwilling to make even far less sacrifices to receive and obey it.

43–45. See Luke xi. 24–26.

43. *When the unclean spirit, &c.* To illustrate the growing depravity of the Jews, Jesus makes use of an illustration suggested by the cure of the demoniac, verse 22, and founded on the common belief in demoniacal possessions. We may suppose that he employed opinions and even superstitions familiar to his hearers, but which he did not believe, as instruments to express and adorn his doctrines. Thus *we* commonly speak of the rising and setting of the sun, though we know that it is philosophically incorrect. Jesus frequently calls to his aid in his instructions the manners, customs, and institutions of his nation and age; without, however, vouching for their goodness and propriety. He even used fictitious narratives, the better to unfold and paint his divine principles. — *Dry places.* Or, waste, desert places, which were supposed to be the peculiar haunts of such spirits. We are to remember that the whole imagery of this parable is Jewish, and are not, therefore, to seek a moral correspondence in all its minutiæ, but to take its general import. — *Seeking rest, &c.* This graphically describes the uneasy, dissatisfied state of one who has partially reformed, but who has not given up all longings after his past sins; though it is observable that the spirit, and not the man, is represented as perturbed.

44. *My house.* The man, in accordance with Jewish notions, is described as being the abode of the evil spirit. — *Empty, swept, and garnished*, i. e. prepared for the guests. No impediment existed to prevent the unclean inhabitant from entering again. So far from any guard being placed to exclude him, his dwelling was ready for his reception. No good thoughts or spiritual affections had been welcomed and entertained to exclude the entrance of evil. A vacant mind is ever an exposed one.

45. *Seven other spirits, more wicked than himself.* Seven was a favorite and sacred number among the Jews. It frequently means *several.* It was the belief of the times that spirits which had been exorcised

Digitized by Google

the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

46 While he yet talked to the people, behold, *his* mother and
47 his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him: Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand

---

might return reinforced to their former haunts. But we are not to admit that Jesus countenances this belief. — *The last state of that man is worse than the first.* An attempt at reformation, which fails, leaves one in a worse condition than ever in some respects; for failure discourages further resolution and effort, and the transgressor, reckless and despairing, may plunge into seven-fold greater wickedness than before. The burnt brand soon kindles again when thrown upon the flames. Heb. vi. 4–6, x. 29; 2 Peter ii. 20. — *So shall it be, &c.* We have here Jesus' own interpretation of this parable. The main purport of it was, that the Jewish nation, having been purified of idolatry by the Babylonish captivity, — so some interpret, — or, according to others, having been aroused from their vices to a temporary reformation by the thrilling appeals of John the Baptist, had now relapsed into a far worse condition than before. They were about to be guilty of greater wickedness than their fathers. They had received cordially the instructions of the great reformer, but experienced only a partial and temporary effect. They quickly subsided into a worse state than ever. It would be more difficult than before to renew them unto repentance and salvation. — We are here incidentally taught the dangers of backsliding, and the difficulty of persevering in an upright course; but we ought not on this account to be deterred from repenting of and forsaking our sins; for a worthy determination, though but partially kept, breaks in some measure the dominion of evil, and enlarges the freedom of the soul. We are to resolve and re-resolve with iron purpose, and step by step to pursue the narrow, but glorious path of virtue. The mountain of holiness is to be built up by adding particle to particle, thought to thought, prayer to prayer.

46–50. Compare Mark iii. 31–35. Luke viii. 19–21.

46. *While he yet talked, &c.* Jesus' method of instruction was oral conversation. He conversed familiarly with the people upon the deep themes of the spiritual life. His condescension and blandness of manner were such that the ignorant and doubting were encouraged to approach him and unburden their difficulties. — *Brethren.* These were either the sons of Mary by Joseph, or, as is more likely, the sons of the sister of Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and therefore the cousins of Jesus. For we know that relatives of that degree were called brothers, according to Jewish custom. The brethren or cousins of Jesus are often alluded to in the New Testament; at least three of the Twelve, James, Simon, and Judas, or Jude, are supposed to have been thus related to him. Matt. xiii. 55; Mark iii. 25, vi. 3; John ii. 12, vii. 35; Acts i. 14; 1 Cor. ix. 5; Gal. i. 19. They came to Jesus, probably strengthened with parental authority, to rescue him, as they considered it, from rash exposure to the hatred of the Jews, to counsel prudence, and to put him upon his guard against their machinations.

Digitized by Google

without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and 48
said unto him that told him: Who is my mother? and who
are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his dis- 49
ciples, and said: Behold, my mother, and my brethren. For 50
whosoever shall do the will of my father, which is in heaven,
the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

What strong collateral testimony is afforded here of Jesus' total independence of his friends and relatives, and the absence of any collusion between them! To their narrow view, he conducted so unwisely as to convict him of derangement. It was not the first or last time that prophets have been confounded with madmen. Mark iii. 21. — *Stood without.* They could not enter the house on account of the crowd. — *Desiring.* Endeavouring. They had been making the attempt to speak with him for a considerable time. Mark iii. 21.

47. We are told that they had sent a message to him, calling him. Their object was, perhaps, to warn him of some plot against his life, and to induce him to withdraw to some more secure place, though selfishness, as well as affection for him, may have mingled in their motives. The crowd was so large that they were unable to speak with him directly. The request was probably passed from one to another through the multitude.

48. Our Lord, ever ready to convert to a moral account the passing incidents of the day and hour, turns to his disciples, and enforcing his words with a gesture of his hand, verse 49, declares who were his mother and his brethren. We are not to suppose that it was any want of filial and fraternal affection that dictated the questions of this verse. Jesus was a dutiful son and an affectionate brother. He discharged the domestic obligations with perfect integrity. He loved the circle of his family none the less, because he loved mankind the more. It was not coldness of affection, but the desire of fastening the attention of the people upon his words, that led him to say, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" Luke ii. 51; John xix. 25–27. Some degree of rebuke, at an untimely interruption of his work and teaching by their officiousness, may be supposed to have been mixed with his words.

49. *Stretched forth his hand, &c.* How vivid the picture of our Saviour's manner here presented! We seem to see him stand with outstretched hand, and countenance beaming with affection upon his disciples, and sublimely saying, — Behold my mother and my brethren! behold those who by their spiritual attachment supply the place to me of the nearest kindred!

"Who is my mother? or my brethren?
He spake, and looked on them who sat around
With a meek smile of pity, blent with love,
More melting than e'er gleamed from human face, —
As when a sunbeam, through a summer shower,
Shines mildly on a little hill-side flock;
And with what look of love he said, Behold
My mother, and my brethren; for I say,
That whoso'er shall do the will of God,
He is my brother, sister, mother, all."

50. *For whosoever shall do the will, &c.* Remark here, how simple is the test he proposes of fellowship and relationship: *the doing of the will of God.* He sets up no arbitrary standard, no dogma of faith, no ecclesiastical rule, but advances one essential and comprehensive requisite, as beautiful as it is explicit. John xiv. 21. — *Is my brother, and*

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

Parables of Jesus.

THE same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the
2 sea-side; and great multitudes were gathered together unto
him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multi-
3 tude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them

---

sister, and mother. Is dear to me as all relatives in one. Says a beautiful writer on the Gospels, Furness, "Is it looking at the passage too curiously, to see in the introduction of the word 'sister,' a little fraction, as it were, a bright but delicate hue of truth?" in relation to the woman who had spoken, Luke xi. 27. Jesus declares the superiority of the spiritual to the natural ties. He elevates the connexions of the good with one another above the tenderest attachments of kindred. He thus proclaims the brotherhood of his disciples with one another and with himself. If, then, we do the will of Heaven, we are encouraged with the thought, that we are forming holy and happy ties with the beings of higher and brighter worlds; that we are entering into blessed associations, not only with the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the glorious company of the apostles, the noble army of martyrs, and the holy church throughout all the earth, but also with him who is Head over all, the beloved Son of God. We are not called to a life of solitary and uncheered virtue. The good are bound together and joined to God and Jesus by the ties of an everlasting sympathy. The golden chain of love which has been let down from heaven joins all below to one another, and all below to all above. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," "for the world passeth away and the lust thereof," "but whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven," said Jesus, "the same is my brother, and sister, and mother," and he abideth for ever.

CHAP. XIII.

1–23. See Mark iv. 1–20; Luke viii. 4–15. The latter Evangelist gives a less full and particular account.

1. *The same day.* Or, perhaps, at that time. For we can hardly conceive that the events and instructions mentioned in the last and this chapter, with those related in the parallel passages, could all have happened in *one day.*—*House.* Matt. xvii. 24. His home seems to have been at the house of Peter.—*Sat by the sea-side.* Capernaum was situated on the Sea of Galilee. He left the house because the multitudes were unable, on account of their number, to hear him, except in a larger place.

2. *He went into a ship.* The original is, the *ship* or *boat*, meaning a particular one kept for this purpose, or more probably one owned by his disciples, who were fishermen. The crowds were so dense as to render it necessary for him to withdraw from the shore, and address them from the water.—*And sat, &c.* It was customary among the Jews for their teachers to give their instructions sitting, but for their hearers to receive them standing. Jesus followed the manners of his day, so far as they were innocent.

Digitized by Google

in parables, saying: Behold, a sower went forth to sow. And 4

3. *Parables.* A parable is a *comparison*, or *similitude*. But the term has a wider meaning. It stands often in the Old Testament for *proverb*. Fables and apologues are parabolical. In the New Testament, parables are usually stories to illustrate spiritual doctrines or facts. It is immaterial whether the narrative be a historical account or not, provided only it is appropriate to the illustration of the truth in hand. This mode of teaching was very popular in the east, and especially among the Jews. We find innumerable specimens of it. In the Old Testament some instances of it occur, as that of the trees, in Jud. ix. 8–15, and that of the poor man, in 2 Sam. xii. 1–7. The Talmudical writings are full of this species of composition. Jesus, therefore, employs it in the instructions of his religion. But it is remarkable, that he commenced it so late in his ministry. Would it not seem that the method of direct precept and proverb had proved inadequate, and that he now resorts to a new instrument of address, better suited to the stupidity of the people, and to the spirituality of his doctrine? The only instance of a parable before this is supposed to have been that of the unclean spirit, Matt. xii. 43–45, illustrating the increasing depravity of the Jewish people. The disciples question him, verse 10, as if he were now introducing a novel way of teaching. There were advantages in it, both to the teacher and to the taught. It saved the one from the bald and open statement of doctrines that would be misunderstood by the people, and draw down their immediate violence, and crush their propagator ere he could explain himself. On the other hand, it delicately veiled spiritual truths in the robes of fancy and imagination, for the benefit of the hearer. It spoke a material language to those who were buried in sense. Again, it conveyed a hidden meaning, which could only be attained by an honest and unprejudiced inquirer, and left those in ignorance who preferred blindness. It taught only those who wished to be taught. In the words of another, "It is naturally adapted to engage the attention, and is level with the capacity of all, and conveys moral or religious truths in a more vivid and impressive manner than the dry, didactic mode, and, by laying hold of the imagination, insinuates itself into the understanding and affections, and while it opens the doctrines it professes to conceal, it gives no alarm to men's prejudices." It extorted assent ere the prejudiced hearer put his mind on the defensive against the truth which it was intended to convey. Furthermore, it planted truths in the memory, which, understood long afterwards, might spring up and bear fruit. The parables of our Lord are always simple, beautiful, and forcible. They often interpret themselves. They are level to the comprehension of the humblest honest mind, whilst they are the vehicle of the profoundest principles of our religion. They have been classified as relating, 1. to the design of the Gospel, as a scheme of mercy; 2. to its rise and progress, both in the individual and the race; 3. its fruits; and 4. its grand consummation in futurity. The following parable is ranked in the second class. —*A sower went forth to sow.* This parable is taken from agriculture, with which the majority of mankind are familiar, and is therefore intelligible and interesting to them. The original is, *the* sower, referring perhaps to some individual then in sight.

Digitized by Google

when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way-side ; and the fowls
5 came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places,
where they had not much earth ; and forthwith they sprung
6 up, because they had no deepness of earth ; and when the
sun was up, they were scorched ; and because they had no
7 root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns ; and
8 the thorns sprung up, and choked them. But other fell into
good ground ; and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold,
9 some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. Who hath ears to hear, let
10 him hear. —— And the disciples came, and said unto him :

---

4. *Some seeds fell by the way-side.* See verse 19. As we have Jesus' own interpretation of this parable, there is no need of an elaborate explanation. The Jews had ways and paths running through and by the side of their cultivated fields, which were trodden hard by men and beasts. Matt. xii. 1. It was in one of these paths that our Saviour and his disciples passed through the grain fields on the Sabbath-day. — *Fowls came and devoured them up.* As the seeds did not sink into the earth, but lay exposed upon the surface, they were carried away by the birds. Luke adds, viii. 5, "and it was trodden down."

5. *Stony places.* Rather, rocky or ledgy places, where the earth was very thin, and not merely a soil filled with stones. — *Sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.* The soil was so shallow, that they soon reached the surface, but had no sufficient root.

6. *When the sun was up, &c.* In Palestine, seed-time was in November, when the sun was overclouded. But when the short winter is past, the heat of the sun parches up the earth, and withers plants that are not deeply rooted.

7. *Fell among thorns.* Several different kinds of thorns are mentioned in the Scriptures. A part of the field is here spoken of in which the shrubs and briers had not been entirely rooted out. These sprang up and choked the tender plants.

8. *Brought forth fruit.* Yielded. *An hundred-fold, &c.* In eastern countries this was a credible increase, where the soil is fertile, and stimulated by a warm atmosphere. Gen. xxvi. 12. This incidental allusion to the fertility of the country, which might be deemed extravagant in some parts of the earth, is a proof of the uncalculating honesty of the account. The terms, *an hundred, sixty, and thirty fold* are not to be taken literally, but as expressing great fruitfulness. This reference to the productiveness of the land of Palestine is an argument that the great population mentioned in the Old Testament might have been supported upon it. Owing to neglect, the country is less fruitful than in former times.

9. *Who hath ears, &c.* A form of expression frequently used at the close of his instructions, or of some remarkable passage; see note on Matt. xi. 15; but, as Campbell observes, always after some parable, or prophetic declaration figuratively expressed. Jesus distinguished those, who had ears to hear and a disposition to learn, from the rest of the thoughtless multitude.

Digitized by Google

Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and 11 said unto them: Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he 12 shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to 13

10. *Why speakest thou unto them in parables?* They ask the question, as if it were a new mode of teaching, to which they were not accustomed.

11. *Answered and said.* Mark represents the succeeding conversation as taking place in private, with the Twelve and other disciples. Jesus now mentions a reason in answer to the question, why he spoke in parables. Amongst other causes, he adopted this mode because he would not longer favor the multitude with privileges which they abused. He wrapped up his meaning in the drapery of parables, because they had not profited by his plainer teachings, and because such seeds of truth might in this way be dropped into their minds, as might, after he was gone, germinate and bring forth fruit. *It is given unto you.* It is your privilege, because of your fidelity to the truth as far as you know it. It would be their duty moreover to spread it to others. — *The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.* Not things incomprehensible in their nature, or seemingly strange and contradictory; but truths before secret, and now made known; such as the spiritual nature of the Gospel, its designed extension to the Gentiles, the suffering character of the Messiah, and the succession of Christianity in the place of Judaism. These were mysteries, that is, something hidden. But as soon as they were revealed, they became objects of knowledge, and were no longer mysteries. Rom. xvi. 25; 1 Cor. xiii. 2; Eph. i. 9, iii. 3, 4. — *But to them it is not given.* This does not mean that they were denied arbitrarily the privilege of understanding the truths and instructions of the Christian system, but had incapacitated themselves by their own perversity. They did not welcome or relish the plainest teachings of the Gospel. Jesus elsewhere said, John iii. 20, 21: "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, but he that doeth truth cometh to the light;" and vii. 17: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine," i. e. so far as one is faithful to the light he already enjoys, will that light increase in distinctness.

12. *Whosoever hath, to him shall be given.* Matt. xxv. 29; Luke xix. 26. This was a proverbial expression. *Hath* is used in two senses, first, that of possession, and second, that of improvement. The signification is, that whosoever hath much and makes a good use of it, will have a greater abundance; but whosoever hath not, i. e. hath little, shall lose even that little which he *seemeth* to have, Luke viii. 18, by carelessness and negligence. It is not meant that the privileges of the slothful are wrested violently from them, but that they naturally lose them by neglect. The application is, that the Jews, by their inattention and prejudice, lose what they had, little though it were, of spiritual privileges, while those who profited by the instructions of Christ would have more and more.

13. *Therefore.* So then. He states in this verse still further his

Digitized by Google

them in parables, because they seeing see not, and hearing
14 they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is
fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith: "By hearing ye
shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see,
15 and shall not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed gross,
and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have
closed, lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and
hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart,
16 and should be converted, and I should heal them." But blessed
are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear.
17 For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous
men have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have

---

reason for using parables. The people were in a moral condition incapable of receiving truth in its naked form. They would be dazzled by its full blaze; it must come to them in the guise of figures and allegories. — *Because*, or since, *they seeing see not*, *&c.* They saw the works of Christ and heard his teachings, but they were made none the wiser or better, for they did not understand or welcome them. Jesus did not use this mode of teaching to keep the people in ignorance; but being ignorant and perverse, he used such a style of address as would instruct those who were well disposed, but would not arouse the passions of the prejudiced. And such truths would be stamped upon their minds by this imagery as might revive, in the course of time, and renovate the character. Their not seeing, hearing, and understanding, was not therefore the *end* he had in view in employing parables, but simply the *occasion* of their use. These figures insinuated the truth, so that it would be remembered; whereas had he spoken plainly, they were so sinful that they could not or would not understand his doctrine.

14. *In them is fulfilled*, i. e. in reference to them the declaration of Isaiah is illustrated Is. vi. 9, 10. The description the prophet gives in his time is applicable to the people of that age. Isaiah probably made here no prediction, but gave a historical description. *Seeing*, i. e. shall see. A Hebrew mode of emphatical expression.

15. *This people's heart is waxed gross*, *&c.* Has become fat. The images in this verse are all of a material nature, fitted to convey a bold and striking impression of the sensual, stubborn, and prejudiced state of the people of that day. — *Lest at any time*, *&c.* Newcome has rendered it, "so that they see not with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor understand with their heart, nor are converted, that I should heal them." They are represented as preferring to continue in their debased condition. They would not see, lest they should see the light; they would not hear, lest they should hear the truth.

16. Our Lord continues the prophet's style of address, and pronounces a benediction upon his disciples, for their good use of their privileges. They were happy in having the seeing eye and the hearing ear. Luke x. 23, 24; 1 Peter i. 10 – 12.

17. *Many prophets.* Teachers. — *Have desired to see*, *&c.* Our Lord here declares, what is evident from

Digitized by Google

not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*. ——Hear ye therefore the parable of the 18 sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and 19 understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart; this is he which received seed by the way-side. But he that received the seed 20 into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, 21

---

the whole tenor of Scripture that there was a deep longing amongst all good men and religious teachers for the coming of a great deliverer. They rejoiced in the day, though it was far off, and they saw only its twilight. John viii. 56; Heb. xi. 13. If the Apostles and disciples were happy in seeing the fulfilment of this great hope in part, how much happier are we, who have seen the meridian glory of the Sun of Righteousness! How much more responsible, that we should walk as the children of the light and of the day!

18. *Hear ye therefore, &c.*, i. e. since *you* are teachable and inquiring, and love the truth, understand the import of the above parable. We are here highly favored in having our Master's own explanation, which is useful not merely for this individual case, but aids us in arriving at those principles on which all parables must be explained. Mark iv. 13. — *The parable of the sower*, i. e. the explanation of the parable.

19. *The word of the kingdom*. The Gospel, the truths of the spiritual kingdom of Christ. — *The wicked one*. The evil one. A personification of all that is or tends to evil. Jesus adopts the phraseology of his time, for thus only could he be understood. So Paul uses the phrase, "the god of this world," 2 Cor. iv. 4, meaning worldly desires. — *Catcheth away*. Implying haste and quickness, as the birds eagerly snatch their food. Luke, viii. 11, adds, "The seed is the word of God." — *This is he which received seed, &c.* Man is compared to the field, and not to the seed; as we say, the sown field, meaning the field that has received seed. The seed was good, but the field did not retain it. So the word was true, but the hearer did not cherish it. There is now, as then, a class of *way-side* hearers. They hearken to the truth, and perhaps acknowledge its correctness, but straightway go about their business or pleasures, and suffer it to slip at once from their minds and hearts. It never descends below the mere surface of their understandings. This is a large class; and nothing more discourages the teachers of religion, than to have hearers whose souls seem to have been trodden and worn so smooth, by many-footed cares and pleasures, as to present an adamantine front against all serious impressions, as the polished shield turns aside every weapon of assault.

20. *Stony places*, i. e. rocky or ledgy ground. — *Anon*. Immediately. — *With joy receiveth it*. This describes a second class of hearers, common in all ages; and delineated by our Lord with vivid, dramatic power. They are not the bronzed, impervious, and indurated souls, who are susceptible of hardly a momentary impression, but those who are easily affected, perhaps even to

Digitized by Google

but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution
22 ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He
also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the
word, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches,
23 choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that re-

---

tears. They gladly and cordially welcome the truth.

21. *Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth;* or endureth. But these persons have no deeply rooted, well grounded principles. They hear the instructions of religion, as they witness a show, or listen to a play at the theatre; and it would seem, at the time, that the effect would be lasting, so carried away are they by the appeal. But alas! it is like the morning cloud and early dew. — *For when tribulation or persecution ariseth*, then they fall. The burning sun of trial withers their rootless virtues. The temptations to which they are exposed on account of religion, the difficulties of a Christian life, the inconvenience arising from an unpopular faith, persecutions, and dangers, cause them to apostatize. For the Gospel has not struck its roots deep into the faculties of their souls. Such is the class of *stony ground hearers.* — *By and by.* Presently, soon. — *Is offended.* Stumbles, is led to transgress.

22. *The care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches.* Mark adds, "the lust of other things," and Luke, "the pleasures of this life." All the various foes of man's moral nature are included in this description. The cares of our worldly life, though necessary, are liable to betray our better interests. It should be our prayer, therefore, that, whilst our *hands* are employed in worldly avocations, our *hearts* may take hold of something more satisfying and durable. The deceptive power of riches is proverbial, so that the Apostle said, "The love of money is the root of all evil," and most powerfully described its seductive fascination and fatal consequences. 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. The desires of ambition, appetite, and pleasure, captivate multitudes of the young, the spirited, and the aspiring, who escape the former tempters. — *Choke the word, &c.* Although men receive the seed of truth, and it becomes rooted, and is growing apace, yet if they suffer their characters to be overrun with weeds and thorns, it cannot become fruitful, but is choked and destroyed. We have now in the world this class of *thorny ground* hearers. They listen with interest, they understand the preached word, they are rooted and grounded in the faith, but life is the touchstone of the character. When they go forth to the perilous scenes of their probation, they are beset with thronging cares, beguiling pleasures, dazzling riches, and all the thousand-fold shapes of evil. Their better principles and feelings are overshadowed by this luxuriant growth of temptations. They can produce few blossoms, much less bring any fruit to perfection. Sowing wheat one day and tares the other six, can they wonder that the harvest is so meagre? As has been said, "If adversity slays its thousands, prosperity slays its ten thousands." — "The above three classes of nominal disciples are distinct from each other. Thoughtlessness or levity of mind distinguishes the first; timidity, or a dread of unpleasant consequences the second; and worldliness, or de-

Digitized by Google

ceived seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty. —— Another parable put he forth unto them, saying: The kingdom 24 of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came, and sowed tares 25 among the wheat; and went his way. But when the blade 26 was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares

votion to wealth, to business, or to any secular interests, the third. But they agree in the effect of their several errors; in none of them is Christian faith operative."

23. *Heareth — understandeth — beareth fruit.* These are the three characteristics of a true Christian, in their natural order. We must first read or hear the truth as it is in Jesus. We must then comprehend it. Mysteries cannot nourish the divine life. Finally, there must be the practical fruits of holy living, piety to God, and benevolence to men, and purity of heart. John xv. 8; Gal. v. 22, 23. "In a rich and mellow soil, in a heart that submits itself to the full influence of truth, unchecked by cares and anxieties, under the mild vernal showers and summer suns of divine grace, with the heart spread open, like a broad luxuriant field to the rays of the morning and evening suns and dews, the Gospel takes deep root and grows; it has full room, and then and there only shows *what it is*." — *Hundred — sixty — thirty.* There are different grades of goodness. All Christians have not attained to an equal stature. Their powers, privileges, and fidelity are various. The reward is apportioned in equity to all. The largest acquirements ought not to nurture pride, and the smallest ought not to beget discouragement. This parable reminds preachers that they ought not to expect that all will profit by their instructions, or that those who do will be all equally benefited. It reminds all of the importance of hearing the truth, receiving it into good and honest hearts, Luke viii. 15, and bringing forth fruit with patience.

24. *The kingdom of heaven.* The divine administration in establishing and spreading Christianity in the world. *Good seed* "is good principles. The bad seed is bad principles. The wheat is good men, whose characters are formed on good principles. The tares are bad men, whose characters are formed on bad principles." The parable is explained by our Lord himself, verses 37 — 43.

25. *While men slept*, i. e. in the night, whilst there were none to observe the mischief done. *Sowed tares.* It is a question what plant is here meant. The English word *tares* describes a kind of vetch. Perhaps a noxious weed, as cockle, or darnel, is intended. In the Rabbinical writers, however, a spurious kind of wheat is mentioned, which infested fields of grain, and somewhat resembled wheat in its form and growth. That plant was perhaps referred to in the text. The Persian version confirms this view, by rendering it, *bitter grain.*

26. *Brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.* The good and the bad plants were so much alike, that they were not distinguishable from each other until the fruit ap-

Digitized by Google

27 also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto
him: Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from
28 whence then hath it tares? He said unto them: An enemy
hath done this. The servants said unto him: Wilt thou then
29 that we go and gather them up? But he said: Nay; lest,
while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with
30 them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the
time of harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather ye together
first the tares, and bind them in bundles, to burn them; but

peared. So it is with good and bad principles. The latter often wear a specious guise, and are only detected when the season arrives of bearing fruit.

27. *So the servants came.* These facts were introduced to give naturalness and vivacity to the story, and ought not, therefore, as commentators say, "to be cut to the quick," or pressed too far. Yet we may suppose that the astonishment of the early teachers of Christianity is described, at finding that evil men as well as good were within the pale of the church.

28. *Wilt thou then that we go, &c.* The first thought was that the tares might be immediately eradicated. So there would be those, who, when they saw the good and the bad mingled together in the same body, would be impatient to make a sudden and violent separation between the two, little considering how difficult it would be to discriminate, and how dangerous to the good to attempt to remove the evil.

29. *Root up also the wheat.* The history of the Christian church powerfully illustrates this passage. The attempt of fallible men to extirpate those believed to be evil and heretical from the enclosure of the church has occasioned the frightful persecutions that darken the pages of history.

30. *Let both grow together until the harvest.* The mixture of good and evil in this life will probably continue unto the end. It is not within human power perfectly to distinguish between the two. Principles, men, and institutions, are all of a mottled character. Even truth, carried to extremes, becomes error, and error itself is powerful, because it has in it a tincture of truth. Characters are so complex, and the roots of good and evil are so matted and interlaced together, that men cannot always know their own hearts accurately; how much less the heart of another, though an intimate friend! and how much less still that of a stranger, or a body of those comparatively strangers! What perfect folly and wickedness, then, for fallible man harshly to judge others! A charitable heart will rather construe all favorably, thinking no evil, hoping for the best, and willing that all should grow together until the harvest, rather than rashly tear up the evil, perhaps at the expense of the good, and what is perhaps itself good. — *Gather ye together, &c.* This indicates, that, although the present is a mixed state of good and bad, there is a time of distinction between them, approaching. In the mean time, to those who are impatient of evil, and would violently root it out, may be applied the language of God, addressed to Abraham, in the celebrated modern apologue, in which the patriarch is described as driving

Digitized by Google

gather the wheat into my barn. —— Another parable put he 31
forth unto them saying: The kingdom of heaven is like to a
grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field.
Which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, 32
it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that
the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.
—— Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of 33
heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in

---

an idolater from his hospitality into the wilderness: "I have borne with him one huadred years, and canst not thou bear with him a single night!" For the interpretation of this parable, see verses 37–43.

31, 32. See Mark iv. 30–32; Luke xiii. 18, 19.

31. *Another parable.* The object of this and the following parable is to show that his spiritual kingdom, from small beginnings, would dilate with a mighty expansion. Both in the individual soul and in the world at large, its commencement would be insignificant, but its growth vast and indefinite. — *A grain of mustard seed.* This was so small as to be proverbial for its littleness. Matt. xvii. 20. See also the next verses. This is not the plant known amongst us by this name, but the mustard tree, not annual, but living and growing several years. How sublime was the faith of Christ in the power of his gospel! For, though small, it contains the germs of a wondrous and mighty growth. "It grew silently, but it grew rapidly. It was of God, therefore it flourished. Beginning in an origin so obscure that the world looked with contempt upon its pretensions, coming forth from a mechanic's abode in the despised city of Nazareth, in the rude province of Galilee, in the conquered land of Palestine, and borne to other countries by men whose nation were the scoff of other nations, and who themselves held the lowest place of society among their countrymen, it spread, it prevailed, it won attention, admiration, obedience, till it became 'the greatest' of the religions of the earth."

32. *Greatest among herbs.* Reference is here made, not to the absolute size of the plant, but to the comparative greatness of the tree which sprang from so small a seed. — *Becometh a tree.* The Jewish writers mention a mustard plant so large that a man might climb it, as he would a fig-tree; and another so tall and spreading as to cover a tent with one of its branches. — *Birds of the air come and lodge in the branches.* So, under the mighty power of the Christian kingdom, multitudes would find refuge and protection. The Gospel would become a tree whose branches would overshadow the whole earth, and the leaves of which would be "for the healing of the nations."

33. Luke xiii. 20. *Leaven.* — Yeast, which has the property of assimilating to its own nature the meal or dough in which it is contained. As in the preceding parable the extensive propagation of Christianity is imaged, so here its diffusive and penetrating character is portrayed. Or, if limited to the individual in its application, it intimates that Christianity was to pervade his whole nature and being, master every power, control every taste, spiritualize every feeling, and

Digitized by Google

34 three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. —— All
these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables, and
35 without a parable spake he not unto them; that it might be
fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will
open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have
been kept secret from the foundation of the world."
36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the
house. And his disciples came unto him, saying: Declare
37 unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered
and said unto them: He that soweth the good seed is the Son

assimilate the whole man to the spirit of Christ and God. — *Three measures.* Each equivalent to one peck and a half English. The quantity used at one time in making bread. — *Till the whole was leavened.* As the leaven would not cease its action till the whole mass was affected by it, so religion would not cease to work in the heart and in the world until it has leavened the whole with its own spirit and power. Thus beautifully Jesus idealizes the most common things, and by them shadows forth the glorious energies of the Gospel.

34, 35. See Mark iv. 33, 34.

34. *Without a parable spake he not.* Not an assertion that he always spoke in parables, but that upon the present occasion he chiefly used this method of instruction.

35. *That it might be fulfilled.* The quotation is not so much a fulfilment as an illustration. As the Psalmist designed to give instruction in a parabolical and poetical form concerning the history of the *past*, so Jesus has, after his example, but not in accordance with any prediction of his, thrown around his doctrines, concerning the future kingdom of God, the graceful garb of parables. — *The prophet.* Ps. lxxviii. 2. This psalm is ascribed to Asaph, chief singer in the reign of David. 1 Chron. xvi. 5. The force of the word *prophet*, as applied to him, may be understood from 1 Chron. xxv. 1, 2, where it appears to be used in the sense of poet or singer. The subject of the Psalmist's composition is the *past* history of the Israelites, while that of Jesus is the *future* promulgation of his Gospel. — *Secret from the foundation, &c.* What had been a secret, a mystery, would now be made known. In his parables Jesus was darkly unfolding the progress of the truth, and revealing things unknown to all former ages. Matthew wrote for the use of the Jews particularly; he delights, therefore, in drawing quotations from their sacred books, the national classics, to illustrate the new religion, and win their favorable attention to its claims.

36. *Declare*, i. e. explain. The disciples did not understand the parable of the tares any more than that of the sower. They shared in the prejudices and ignorance of their day, and only excelled others in their having more of the truth-seeking spirit.

37. *He that soweth, &c.* We learn here, that the particular design of the parable was not so much to illustrate the mixture of good and evil in the general government of God, as under the Christian dispensation. There would be good and bad principles, and good and bad men in the Christian world. But

Digitized by Google

of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children 38
of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked
one; the enemy, that sowed them, is the devil; the harvest is 39
the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As, 40
therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so
shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall 41
send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom
all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall 42
cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and

---

they were not to be violently severed one from the other, else the good would suffer with the bad. Jesus sowed only good seed in his field. His revelations were dimmed by no error.

38. *The field is the world.* That is, the whole earth. — *Children of the kingdom.* It is not properly the children of the kingdom that are sown, but those truths which make men Christians, or members of Christ's kingdom. It is customary, in the Hebrew language, to call those children or sons of any being or thing who exhibit dispositions congenial with it. So, the *children of the wicked one* are those who have a wicked spirit, such as is imputed to the author of evil.

39. *The devil.* It was supposed among oriental nations, that there were two principles, one good, and the author of all good, and the other evil, and the author of all evil. Our Lord refers the evil in his church to this reputed author of evil. — *The end of the world.* This but imperfectly expresses the original. The sense is, the conclusion of this state of things, as some suppose, the end of the Jewish dispensation; or, as others believe, the end of the time, i. e. of the Christian dispensation. There is an indefiniteness about the phrase, which commentators have never fully cleared up. It is enough for us to know that there is to be a righteous judgment at the conclusion of this state of things, to which the Christian church, in common with the rest of the world, will be subjected, and the good distinguished from the bad. — *The reapers are the angels.* The ministry of angels was supposed, among the Jews, to constitute a part of the divine government and providence. Ps. lxxviii. 49, xci. 11; Acts. vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19; Heb. ii. 2. Hence angels are introduced in the imagery of the parable, in harmony with the belief of the times, and represented as performing the work of their great task-master.

40. *Tares are gathered and burned.* On account of the scarcity of wood in Palestine, it was the custom to burn dried plants, hay, or stubble, for cooking and other purposes. For the convenience of transportation, they were tied in bundles.

41. *All things that offend.* Literally, all stumbling-blocks, i. e. all persons or things that cause men to transgress. Matt. xvi. 27. — *Them which do iniquity.* Synonymous with the last expression. False teachers; wicked men; any who cause others to fall.

42. *A furnace of fire.* Dan. iii. 11; Matt. xxv. 41; Rev. xx. 14, 15. This refers to the oriental punishment of burning alive, and implies the severest infliction of pain, and the dreadful sufferings of the wicked. The figure of a furnace of fire may

Digitized by Google

43 gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth, as
the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to
44 hear, let him hear. —— Again the kingdom of heaven is like
unto treasure hid in a field, the which, when a man hath found,
he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he
45 hath, and buyeth that field. ——Again the kingdom of heaven
46 is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls; who,
when he hath found one pearl of great price, went and sold all

---

also have been suggested by the burning of the tares in verse 30. — *Wailing and gnashing of teeth.* The natural expressions of intense pain.

43. *Shine forth, as the sun.* Dan. xii. 2, 3; Rev. ii. 28. An image implying strength, beauty, and glory. — *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.* See note on Matt. xi. 15. Three very important lessons are conveyed by this parable. One against disappointment at finding imperfections in the Christian church, or even hypocrisy and wickedness; for it was predicted that there would be, by him who knew what was in man. The second is against persecution. The grossly immoral may be distinguished and expelled, but it is not for erring man to condemn his brother for modes of faith or customs of worship. We must wait until the harvest before we can perfectly know the true from the false, the right from the wrong. The decision will fall to one in whom we have perfect confidence. With patience then let us wait the great issue. We learn, thirdly, from this parable, the inconceivable misery consequent upon wickedness, and the glorious reward which awaits the righteous.

44. *Treasure hid in a field.* The allusion is here not, probably, to a treasure, as that of money, which had been artificially concealed, but to some native precious mine, as of gold or silver. — *He hideth.* Or, he keeps it secret. — *Selleth all that he hath, &c.* He is willing to sacrifice every thing else for the great prize he has in view. This parable shows the preciousness of the Gospel, and the efforts and sacrifices worthy to be made in securing it. Worldly gratifications, sensual indulgences, cherished schemes of ambition, ease and riches and reputation, all that men have and love, they should be willing to relinquish for this inexhaustible and eternal treasure. Jesus even required that a man should give up father and mother, brother and sister, wife and children, houses and lands, yea, and his own life also, if need be, to become his true disciple. But this self-denying spirit is its own exceeding great reward, and compensates for all losses.

45. *Merchant man, seeking goodly pearls.* It is customary in the east for travelling merchants to purchase and exchange gems and other valuables. Wisdom is often likened to rubies, gold, and silver. Ps. xix. 10; Prov. iii. 13–15. See note on Matt. vii. 6. The nearness of the coasts of the Red Sea brought pearls into the Jewish market. They were highly esteemed on account of their rareness and beauty, and were precious in proportion to their size. They are the product of a kind of oyster.

46. *Sold all that he had, and bought it.* He, like the man of the

Digitized by Google

that he had, and bought it. —— Again the kingdom of heaven 47
is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of
every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and 48
sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad
away. So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels 49
shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,
and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be 50
wailing and gnashing of teeth. —— Jesus saith unto them: 51
Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him:
Yea, Lord. Then said he unto them: Therefore every scribe, 52

---

preceding parable, sacrificed every minor consideration to attain his principal end. In one case, however, the treasure was one unexpectedly found, and in the other diligently sought. Religion is the unspeakable treasure to those to whom it comes, comparatively without seeking, as well as to those who travel far, or study long, to gain it. But to many "the pearl has ceased to be precious, because it has always been in our hands. The treasure is no longer hidden, and, without the joy of discovery, we do not think of the worth of possession."

47. *A net.* A *drag net*, sweeping, as it were, the bottom of the river or lake, and gathering every thing into it.

48. *Cast the bad away.* The worthless on account of their smallness or kind, for some sorts of fish were unclean to the Jews. Lev. xi. 10. This was an illustration peculiarly appropriate to the fishing population of Galilee, whom he was then addressing.

49. *At the end of the world.* The parable of the net and the fishes is explained in this and the following verse. Some understand, by *the end of the world*, the end of the Jewish dispensation by the sack of Jerusalem, and others the destruction of the world itself. The object of the parable appears to have been to forewarn the early disciples that all kinds of persons would be gathered into the Christian church, but that eventually a separation would take place, and that at the judgment, whether in the Jewish overthrow, or at the end of the material world, the good and the bad would meet respectively with their merited rewards and punishments. — *The angels.* See note on verse 39.

50. See note on verse 42. Who can doubt that there is a fearful punishment awaiting the wicked, here and hereafter, when Jesus himself, the compassionate Teacher, has described it with images of all that is most terrible to the apprehensions of men, — the outer darkness, the unquenchable fire, and the never dying worm?

51. *Understood all these things?* The parable which he had explained furnished a clue for understanding the rest. The thought is here suggested of the importance of having a rational belief. The Gospel is a *revelation*. If we would be enlightened or saved by it, it must be through our clear comprehension of its truths, duties, and promises. Ill would it become us to call it a revelation from heaven, if it was not intelligible to the human mind. Its best emblem is light.

52. As they understood his doctrines, he inculcates in the following parable their obligations to teach them. — *Every scribe, &c.* A doctor of the Jewish law, but meaning

Digitized by Google

which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which bringeth forth out of his
53 treasure *things* new and old. ——And it came to pass, *that*, when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.
54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said: Whence hath this *man* this wisdom, and *these* mighty
55 works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon,

---

here a teacher of Christianity, as is expressed by the phrase, *instructed unto the kingdom of heaven*. — *Householder*. The father or master of a family. — *Bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old*. This refers to providing for the sacred rites, according to Lightfoot. The wine, corn, or fruits, new or old, of the present or past years. A thrifty householder would be well stored with both, as might be required. So the religious instructer would study variety in his teachings. He would draw from the old as well as the new dispensation. He would teach the truths of natural and revealed religion; those which were old to his mind, and those which are now learned for the first time from his Master himself. In his method of instruction he was to combine precept and parable. — It is an important rule for every minister of the Gospel to study variety, and, within just limits, novelty, both in the manner and matter of his discourses, whilst at the same time the old and familiar should not pall upon his interest, or that of his hearers. He should adapt his teachings to the capacities, tastes, and condition of his charge.

53 – 58. See Mark vi. 1 – 6.

54. *His own country*, i. e. his own town, Nazareth, where he had been brought up. Capernaum was called his own city, as it was subsequently his chief place of residence. Matt. ix. 1. Jesus had made a previous visit at Nazareth and met with an inhospitable reception, as is related Luke iv. 16 – 30. — *Synagogue*. This was on the Sabbath-day. Mark vi. 2. — *They were astonished*. Two reasons are assigned for their wonder and surprise, — his wisdom, or his instructions of truth, and his mighty works or miracles. As he had been brought up amongst them, they could not realize that he was any thing more than a common individual, for he had studied under none of the doctors of the law. John vii. 15.

55. *Carpenter's son*. Mark vi. 3, records it, "Is not this the carpenter?" As Joseph worked at some mechanical trade, it is probable that Jesus also pursued the same occupation before his ministry. It was the custom of the Jews for the sons even of rich and distinguished men to learn some useful handicraft. Joseph was probably poor, an additional reason why his family should be employed in manual labor. — God has eminently honored labor, and woe is the world because the false notion has crept into it, that it is disgraceful! Disgraceful! when the patriarchs, kings, and prophets of Israel were many of them shepherds and husbandmen; when David was summoned from the sheepfold to the throne, and Elisha and Amos from their flocks and fields to the prophetic office; when the Son

Digitized by Google

and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us? whence 56
then hath this *man* all these things? And they were offended 57
in him. But Jesus said unto them: A prophet is not without
honor, save in his own country, and in his own house. And 58
he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

---

of God himself was subject unto his earthly parents in his youth, and labored in their lowly employments, until his hour came when he should go forth to be the Light of the world; when fishermen apostles were his bosom friends, and Paul, the tent-maker, the herald of the Gospel to the Gentile world! Or if these human and celestial examples are not enough, "Go to the *ant*, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise." — *His brethren.* See notes on Matt. x. 3, xii. 46. They were probably cousins, though the question is not a material one. Three of those mentioned here, James, Simon, and Judas, probably belonged to the Twelve. Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark xv. 40.

56. *His sisters.* The same remark respecting the degree of relationship is applicable here as in the preceding verse. — *Are they not all with us?* i. e. do they not live amongst us? — *Whence then hath this man all these things?* There could be but one answer to this question: viz. that he derived them from on high. A young man of Nazareth of Galilee, uninstructed in the learning of his age, acquainted only with the Hebrew Scriptures, and surrounded by the narrowing influences of his time and nation, even occupied with domestic cares and mechanical labors, dilates at once into a mighty reformer and wonder-worker. The change was too great to be credited by his former acquaintances. They incredulously inquire whence he derived his wisdom and power. Jesus on another occasion answered the question himself: — "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."

57. *They were offended in him.* They were scandalized at him. They were jealous of him, for he had been brought up amongst them in an humble condition. They were acquainted with his family and friends; and they could not receive one, with whose early life they were so familiar, as being indeed a prophet or the Messiah. Pride, envy, and prejudice combined against their admission of his divine authority. — *A prophet is not without honor, &c.* By *prophet* may here be meant any religious teacher. Jesus here quotes a proverb which was common among the Jews; implying that early acquaintance and familiarity with the highest personage would breed jealousy and contempt of him. Those who had been accustomed to look upon him in an humble condition could with difficulty learn to respect his new claims to the most exalted office. John iv. 44. This proverb does not imply that he was not also treated ill elsewhere, which was the fact.

58. *Did not many mighty works.* Mark states, that he did nothing except lay his hand upon a few sick persons and heal them. — *Because of their unbelief.* Some have supposed that the miraculous power of Christ was dependent upon faith, as an essential condition of its exercise, and that he literally could not, as Mark says, vi. 5, exert his power, because the Nazarenes had no faith in him. But in many in-

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV.

The Death of John the Baptist. — Jesus miraculously feeds Five Thousand, and walks on the Sea of Galilee.

AT that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,

stances he wrought miracles upon inert matter, or upon the unconscious dead, or upon disbelieving or unwilling subjects. Matt. viii. 29; Luke xxii. 51. Why then, it may be asked, could he not perform his usual wonders at Nazareth? There were two reasons. One was, that he had few opportunities. There was such aversion and unbelief in relation to him, that they did not bring their sick to be healed. But in the few cases which were presented, his power was triumphant as on other occasions. — Again, there was a moral reason why he did not perform many miracles there. The people were not in a condition to be properly impressed by them. They would not admit them as wrought of God, and evidences of the divine authority of his messenger. Although, then, miracles were designed to create confidence and faith in Christ, yet, where unbelief already existed to the contrary, supported by groundless prejudices, these wonders would prove in vain. Jesus would not therefore increase their temptations, and enhance their guilt, by obtruding upon them his wonderful works, which he foresaw they would gainsay and frustrate, so far as any moral effect was concerned. Where unbelief was owing not to a want of evidence, but to a want of a right disposition to admit that evidence even when it was furnished, it was needless, and would aggravate their guilt, to supply it. — In the conduct of the Nazarenes, we are taught the influence of groundless prejudices in preventing the reception of the Gospel. This cause, under other forms, operates now, as it did then. Would that we might rise above the thwarting influence of our prejudices! for no intellectual hindrance is greater to the perception of truth.

CHAP. XIV.

1, 2. Mark vi. 14–16; Luke ix. 7–9. The two last Evangelists are more full in their accounts, and relate not only the conjecture of Herod, but of others; of some, that Elijah, and of others, that one of the old prophets, had appeared.

1. *Herod the tetrarch.* This was a son of Herod the Great, called Antipas. To him fell, in the division of his father's government, the provinces of Galilee and Perœa. See note on Matt. ii. 22. — *Tetrarch* signifies strictly the ruler of the fourth part of a kingdom or empire, but is also used in a more general sense. — *Heard.* Absorbed in his affairs or his pleasures, Herod had not heard of Jesus as contemporaneous with John, but seems now to have learned for the first time that there was such a person. We are to recollect that there were then but few facilities for gaining intelligence, and that the news even of the works and teachings of Christ would spread but slowly, and with difficulty gain access to the courts of princes. Perhaps Herod had been absent from his province hitherto, either in his war with Aretas, a king of Arabia, or on a journey to Rome. Some commentators, among whom is Kuinoel, suppose that Herod had heard of Jesus before, but that he now had his attention called to him in a particular manner.

Digitized by Google

and said unto his servants: This is John the Baptist; he is 2
risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth
themselves in him. —— For Herod had laid hold on John, and 3
bound him, and put *him* in prison, for Herodias' sake, his
brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him: It is not law- 4

---

2. *Servants.* The inmates of his palace, or his courtiers. — *This is John.* Luke states that he was perplexed to know who Jesus was. In saying that this was the one whom he had beheaded, the mighty workings of a guilty conscience are laid open; the bloody image of his murdered victim rose to his mind's eye, and haunted the scenes of his splendor, and led him, as soon as this distinguished character appeared, to identify him with John. A striking testimony to the force of conscience! Herod, in the midst of his power and magnificence, could not escape the pangs of remorse and ghastly fears, for having unjustly put to death a good man and bold censor. The arrow of self-condemnation pierces him through the purple of royalty. — *He is risen from the dead.* It has been conjectured that Herod belonged to the sect of Sadducees, (compare Matt. xvi. 6; Mark viii. 15,) who disbelieved in the resurrection of the dead, and that his convictions of guilt overcame his speculative belief. The most wicked are often the most superstitious. — *Mighty works do show forth themselves, &c.* i. e. "mighty powers operate by him;" which it was supposed would be the case with the prophet who was to precede the Messiah. The conscience-smitten Herod may have supposed that this power was to vindicate John's innocence and avenge his death; that the same energy that raised him from the dead continued to operate in him and enable him to do mighty works after his resurrection.

3–5. See Mark vi. 17–20; Luke iii. 19, 20.

3. *Herod had laid hold, &c.* Matthew here makes a digression, to relate what had happened some time before, by way of explaining what Herod had said concerning John in verse 2. — *Put him in prison.* This was a gross act of injustice and tyranny, the consummation, as it would appear from Luke iii. 19, 20, of other indignities. John was imprisoned, as we learn from Josephus, in the fortress of Machærus, situated on the river Jordan north of the Dead Sea. — *Herodias' sake.* She was the grand-daughter of Herod the Great, and the daughter of Aristobulus. Her character was stained with licentiousness and cruelty. — *Brother Philip's wife.* Antipas and Philip were half-brothers, being sons of Herod the Great by different mothers. Herodias had eloped from her husband, Philip, who is supposed to have been a private man, and not the tetrarch of Iturea, by whom she had one daughter, Salome, and now lived with Herod Antipas, who had repudiated his wife, the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia. Incensed by this outrage, Aretas made war upon Antipas, and defeated him in battle with great loss. The soldiers on their way to this war are supposed to have been the ones addressed by John the Baptist, Luke iii. 14. As Herod had rendered himself in some measure unpopular by this needless war, he would the more fear John's influence over the people, and shrink from subjecting himself to the odium of putting so

Digitized by Google

5 ful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to
death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a
6 prophet. But when Herod's birth-day was kept, the daughter
7 of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod; where-
upon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she

great and good a man to death.—It may be observed here that one bad act is usually a prelude to another. Adultery led to the imprisonment and death of John. The Rubicon of virtue once crossed, there is no limit to ambition and wickedness.

4. *John said.* Kept saying, according to Carpenter, for such is the force of the imperfect tense.—*Not lawful for thee to have her.* According to the law of Moses, a man was to marry his brother's widow if he died childless, in order to perpetuate the line. But in the present instance the parties were guilty of adultery and incest, for Herod had causelessly abandoned his own, and taken another man's wife, which was adultery; and he had moreover taken a near relative, without the existence of those circumstances, viz., the death of his brother, and that without children, which could alone prevent their being guilty of incest. Thus there was a double transgression of the laws of God. Josephus confirms in his history the account here given, and thus incidentally, and all the more powerfully, substantiates the truth of the Gospels. Herod had seduced the wife of his brother while on a visit to him; a horrible breach of the rites of hospitality.

5. *When he would have*, i. e. when he wished. Mark says, that "Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him, but she could not."—*He feared the multitude, &c.* The Pharisees, Matt. xxi. 26, were prevented by the same fear of the people from saying that the baptism of John was not from heaven, but of men. Mark states the reason to have been, that "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy." The two reasons are compatible with each other, and they disclose the independence of the historians. The evil nature of Herod shrank by fear from the bold and honest reformer. His dread was the tribute that vice pays to virtue. His fear of the people was a different and altogether lower sentiment; an apprehension lest, if John was put to death, a rebellion would be excited amongst his subjects.

6–12. See Mark vi. 21–29.

6. *Herod's birth-day.* It was customary for kings and princes to celebrate their birth-days with great magnificence, as we learn both from sacred and profane history. Gen. xl. 20. Upon the present occasion Herod gave an entertainment to his nobility and chief officers, Mark vi. 21. Whether the festival was at Machærus, where John was imprisoned, or elsewhere, we know not.—*Daughter of Herodias.* We learn from Josephus that the name of this daughter was Salome.—*Danced.* What was the nature of her dancing we are not informed. Some suppose it to have been of an indecent kind; but others, among whom is that great authority, Lightfoot, consider it as a dance to express joy for the life and prosperity of Herod.—*Pleased Herod.* It was great condescension for one in her station to appear before the company. Esther i. 11, 12. He might have been further pleased with the grace and elegance of her movements.

Digitized by Google

would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, 8
said: Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. And 9
the king was sorry; nevertheless, for the oath's sake, and them
which sat with him at meat, he commanded *it* to be given *her*.

---

7. *Give her whatsoever she would ask.* Mark adds, "unto the half of my kingdom." Flushed with wine and excitement, and transported with the dancing of Salome, he is impelled in a fatal moment to make a rash and dangerous promise, confirmed with an oath. For another instance of a rash vow, see Judges xi. 31.

8. *Instructed of her mother.* It would appear from Mark that she was not instructed before she came in to dance, but that she went out, and received her instructions before she gave her answer. Perhaps there was a preconcerted design to accomplish John's death, though it seems hardly probable. — *John Baptist's.* An erroneous translation for John the Baptist's. — *In a charger.* An antiquated word, meaning a platter or large dish. It was customary for rulers and kings to require the head of their victim to be brought to them after his execution, both as a proof of its certainty and as a gratification to their revenge. Thus in ancient Rome the head of her rival was brought to Agrippina, the mother of Nero; and, in modern times, the head of a celebrated Turkish pacha, after being cut off, was sent to Constantinople, and exhibited publicly on a dish. From the account in Mark vi. 25, we might infer that Salome was quite young, from the childlike sprightliness and haste with which she returned from her mother to the king, but the bloody request she made with apparent heartiness would indicate that she was older in years and in wickedness.

9. *The king was sorry.* Tetrarchs were sometimes called by this title. According to Mark, he was "exceeding sorry." This might have been occasioned by his respect for John, Mark vi. 20, or the reproof of a not wholly deadened conscience, or his fear of a popular commotion. His sorrow, however, was of no very salutary kind, for it did not result in repentance, or arrest the sinful deed. Few are so bad as not to be more or less sorry for the commission of a wicked act, but yet they go on and consummate it. — *Oath's sake.* This was the first cause of the subsequent crime. Herod had been ensnared into a rash promise which he had sealed with an oath. The true way then open before him was to avoid doing wrong, even at the cost of breaking his promise. As it was wrong to make the promise, much more was it wrong to keep it. No promise or oath could justify murder. But probably Herod feared lest his honor might be wounded, rather than that the sacredness of an oath would be violated. Honor, falsely so called, has led to many monstrous deeds. — *Them which sat with him at meat.* This was the second cause of the crime. His guests around reinforced the request of Salome, or we may suppose that he felt a reluctance to break his word in their presence. It is probable that John was obnoxious to them, as well as to Herod and Herodias, for he had not spared sinners in high places. — "In how dispassionate a manner and with what uncommon candor does Matthew relate this most atrocious action! No exclamation! No exaggeration! No invective! There is no allowance, which even the friend of Herod would have urged

Digitized by Google

10 And he sent and beheaded John in the prison. And his head
11 was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel; and she
12 brought *it* to her mother. And his disciples came and took up
13 the body, and buried it; and went and told Jesus. —— When
Jesus heard *of it*, he departed thence by ship into a desert place

---

in extenuation of his guilt, that his historian is not ready to make. 'He was sorry; nevertheless, from a regard to his oath, and his guests.'"

10. *Sent and beheaded John.* What a picture of the violence and cruelty of the age! A prophet of God, without accusation, or trial, or sentence, or previous notice, is slain in the prison to which the pique of a licentious woman and the injustice of her paramour had consigned him. No wonder the unquiet conscience of Herod suggested that the Great Wonder-worker was the prisoner whom he had beheaded, and who was now risen from the dead, to do mighty works. — Josephus, though not favorable to Christianity, has incidentally given powerful confirmations to the truth of its history. I will adduce two instances; one relating to the character of Herodias, and the other to that of John. Josephus says of Herodias, "She was a woman full of ambition and envy, having a mighty influence on Herod, and able to persuade him to things he was not at all inclined to do." And respecting John, that "some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army [in the war with Aretas] came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John that was called the Baptist; for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another and piety towards God, and so come to baptism."

11. *His head was brought, &c.* Mark informs us, that Herod sent an executioner immediately, who went and beheaded John in prison. If Herod was at this time at Tiberias, the city in which his court was usually held, an interval of more than a day must have occurred before the head was brought from Machærus, where John was imprisoned. — *Brought it to her mother.* What a gift from a daughter to a mother! The head of one of God's greatest prophets! Herodias had thus an opportunity of gratifying her resentment, and being assured that her enemy was dead. But this awful crime did not go unpunished. As already mentioned by Josephus, the army of Herod was defeated by Aretas, whose daughter he had divorced to take Herodias. Both Herod and his wife were afterwards deprived of their kingdom and banished into Gaul, and afterwards to Spain, where he died; while Salome, if we may credit Nicephorus, an early writer, was killed during their exile in attempting to cross a river on the ice.

12. *Buried it.* Or, as Mark says, "laid it in a tomb." — *Went and told Jesus.* As Jesus had been a friend of their master, and they had previously been sent with messages to him, they are naturally drawn to him by friendship and spiritual ties. Probably some of them became his disciples.

13–21. Parallel to Mark vi. 31–44; Luke ix. 10–17; John vi. 1–13. The narrative dropped at verse 3 is here resumed, after the digression to relate the history of John's death.

13. *Heard of it*, i. e. not of the death of John, for that took place

Digitized by Google

apart; and when the people had heard *thereof*, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude; and was 14
moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.
—— And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, say- 15
ing: This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send
the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy
themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them: They need 16
not depart; give ye them to eat. And they say unto him: We 17
have here but five loaves and two fishes. He said: Bring 18

long before, but that Herod had had report of him, verse 3. — *Departed thence by ship into a desert place apart*, i. e. into a country comparatively uncultivated and uninhabited. From Luke we learn, that it was near the city of Bethsaida, and from John, that it was on the other side of the Sea of Galilee and beyond the jurisdiction of Herod, in the dominion of Philip. Several reasons may be assigned for Jesus' withdrawal. He would not trust himself in the power of the fox-like Herod, who desired to see him. He had not yet completed his ministry, and he would not rashly expose himself to danger, or give the people an opportunity to raise a tumult in his name and endeavor to make him king. — *Followed him on foot.* Or, as Mark has it, "ran afoot." This word is not used in contrast with riding, as would at first appear, but in contrast with going by sea or ship. Jesus sailed across the lake, whilst the people went round by land to the place where he went ashore.

14. *Jesus went forth, &c.* From John's account we learn that Jesus had gone up into a mountain apart with his disciples, probably for rest, and seclusion, and when he saw the people "as sheep not having a shepherd," Mark vi. 34, that he was immediately prompted to go forth, forgetful of his own fatigue, to heal their sick, and preach the Gospel. For their teachers were "blind leaders of the blind," and they needed some one to enlighten their ignorance, and guide them into ways of peace and pleasantness, into green pastures and by the side of still waters. The Good Shepherd looked with pity upon those thus wandering and lost.

15. *When it was evening.* The Jews had two evenings, one corresponding in some measure to our afternoon, beginning at three o'clock and ending at six; the other answered to our evening or night, and began at six o'clock. This kind of evening was spoken of in verse 23. — *The time is now past*, i. e. the hour is late. It was near night; and the multitude, hungry and weary, required refreshment, which the disciples said they could procure in the neighboring villages.

16. *They need not depart, &c.* John relates the conversation between Jesus and Philip, in which the Master put his disciple's faith to the proof by asking him, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat!" knowing himself that he should work a miracle to satisfy their wants. He would cultivate an implicit faith in his followers, and therefore says to them, "Give ye them to eat;" though they had but five loaves and two fishes.

17. John vi. 8, 9. A lad in at-

Digitized by Google

19 them hither to me. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves and the two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, he blessed; and brake, and gave the loaves to *his* disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.
20 And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of
21 the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they

---

tendance had all the food in their possession; and what was that among so many? What were five loaves and two fishes, to five thousand men, besides women and children? The loaves were made of barley, and the fishes were probably from the neighboring lake, which supplied the surrounding population. The bread used among the Jews was not baked in the form of our loaves, but rather in that of cakes or biscuits. Hence they were never cut with a knife, but broken; see verse 19, and Matt. xxvi. 26.

19. *To sit down on the grass*, i. e. *to recline*, after the eastern custom when about to partake of food. The mention of the grass, and, by Mark, of "the green grass," and, by John, that "there was much grass in the place," is one of those natural particularities that mark an eyewitness of the scene, or one that received his account from an eyewitness. The grass spoken of shows that this was not a barren desert, but only an uncultivated region, probably devoted to pasturage. The other Evangelists state, that they were seated in companies, by fifties and hundreds, which enabled them to be easily counted. — *Looking up to heaven, he blessed.* He made a prayer of thanksgiving over the food about to be distributed; a manifestation of the piety of Jesus and his sense of dependence on God. He blessed God for the food. The custom of grace at meals was universal among the Jews. The form was in these words: "Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, who hast produced this food from the earth, (or this drink from the vine)." The fact that Jesus often prayed is an evidence that he is not God, but the Son of God.

20. *And they did all eat, and were filled*, i. e. they had a sufficiency, an important consideration to substantiate the miracle. — *Twelve baskets full.* The word in the original, *cophini*, is found in classic writers, where it appears to signify a hamper or pannier, such as the Jews were accustomed to carry about with them in their wanderings in Gentile countries, where they received but little hospitality and were obliged to furnish their own bedding and food, fearing also, perhaps, that they should be polluted by that of the Gentiles. Jesus had directed them to gather up the fragments that remained, that nothing might be lost, John vi. 12, 13; where the fragments are spoken of as what remained of the five barley loaves, but in Mark, as resulting from the fishes also. The capacity of the baskets is not known, probably they were such as the disciples carried with them in their journeys. And it has been suggested that each Apostle filled his basket with the fragments, thus making twelve in number. Although there was a profusion of food miraculously created, yet the fragments were gathered up with as much care as from an ordinary meal, and a lesson of frugality indirectly taught by him whose most common acts were pregnant with meaning and truth.

Digitized by Google

that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a 22
ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes 23
away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray. And when

Nothing could more strongly impress them with the sense of the astonishing miracle than finding that far more remained, after so many thousands had eaten, than there was at first.

21. *Five thousand men, &c.* Their arrangement in companies of fifties and hundreds made it easy to count them. A miraculous increase of food is also related in 1 Kings xvii. 16, 2 Kings iv. 42–44, though in much smaller quantity. It is interesting to notice that Jesus adapted his miracles, as he did his instructions, to different classes of persons; some to his disciples, and some, as in this case, to a vast multitude. Few miracles could be less exposed to cavil than this, which addressed not only the eye, but satisfied the appetite of thousands. What could have been more morally sublime, or a higher proof of divine authority, than the creation so suddenly of an immense quantity of food, to relieve the famishing crowd? What then shall we say of that Providence which supplies the wants of a dependent universe, and every moment diffuses life and happiness throughout millions of beings and worlds? The effect of the miracle is described in John vi. 14, 15.

22–36. Mark vi. 45–56. John vi. 14–21.

22. *Constrained his disciples, &c.* Perhaps the disciples favored the multitude in their desire to take Jesus and make him king, and Jesus was obliged therefore to be peremptory in sending them away, as he could more easily dismiss the people without their presence. — *The other side*, i. e. the west side of the lake, according to Mark, "unto Bethsaida," whilst John says, they "went over the sea, toward Capernaum." Both are correct, as another Bethsaida was on the western side of the lake, whilst they were near one on the eastern side. Capernaum was also on the northwest side. — *Sent the multitudes away.* It would seem that he had acquired such complete ascendancy over the people, that he could dismiss them without difficulty when freed from the perhaps embarrassing presence of his ambitious disciples.

23. *Went up into a mountain apart to pray.* An eminence that probably overlooked the lake. He had just given a manifestation of his benevolence by feeding the fainting multitude; he now exhibits his piety by communing with God; so intimate is the union between love to man and love to his Maker. It is noticeable, that he retires apart to pray, agreeably to his direction of seclusion in performing this act, Matt. vi. 6. He retires to a mountain, "where inviolate stillness dwelt," and where "the spirit of the solitude fell solemnly" upon the breast. He had just passed through a critical passage of his life, and he turns to offer his thanksgivings to God; the Holiest on earth adoring the Holiest in heaven.

> "Cold mountains and the midnight air
> Witnessed the fervor of his prayer."

What a beautiful example of trust and love towards God, of the obligations and pleasures of prayer and

Digitized by Google

24 the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was
now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind
25 was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus
26 went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples

secret communion, is here offered to our imitation! If, too, it was necessary and delightful to Jesus to refresh his spiritual being with these communings with Heaven, how much more is it needful for us, enveloped in the smoke and din of the earth! "It is extraordinary, that these frequent accounts of Jesus' praying to God should not have prevented any idea of his being himself God. For, if he had been God, he could not have any occasion to pray. That his human nature prayed to his divine nature, or that one part of himself prayed to the other part, is too absurd to be replied to." — *The evening was come.* This is the second evening, as that mentioned in verse 15 was the first, according to the Jewish method of computing time. — *He was there alone*, yet not alone, for the Father was with him.

"'He was there alone,' — when even
Had round earth its mantle thrown;
Holding intercourse with Heaven.
'He was there alone.'

"There his inmost heart's emotion
Made he to his Father known;
In the spirit of devotion,
Musing there 'alone.'

"So let us, from earth retiring,
Seek our God and Father's throne;
And to other scenes aspiring,
Train our hearts 'alone.'"

24. *Tossed with waves.* Violently tossed with the waves, for so the original authorizes us to translate it. This lake was subject to sudden squalls and frequent gusts of wind from the surrounding mountains. Dr. Clarke says, that a boisterous sea is instantly raised, when the strong current made by the Jordan is opposed by contrary winds, which sometimes blow here with the force of a hurricane from the southeast.

25. *Fourth watch of the night.* Anciently the Jews divided the night into three parts; the first lasting till midnight, Lam. ii. 19; the second, from midnight till cock-crowing, Judg. vii. 19; the third or morning watch, from cock-crowing till the rising of the sun, Ex. xiv. 24; 1 Sam. xi. 11. But after the conquest of Palestine by Pompey, this mode was superseded by the Roman division of the night into four watches, which furnishes an incidental evidence of the period when these events took place, and authenticates the Gospel history. By this last division, 1st, the evening watch was from six to nine o'clock; 2d, midnight watch, from nine to twelve; 3d, cock-crowing, from twelve to three; 4th, morning, or fourth watch, from three to six. It was, therefore, after three in the morning, when Jesus came to them. So long had he been engaged in communion with God; finding thus his rest in prayer, as at another season he found it to be his meat and drink to do the will of his Father. Upon a previous occasion, Luke vi. 12, just before the choice of his twelve Apostles, he continued all night in prayer. — *Walking on the sea.* This was an undoubted exhibition of supernatural power. The Egyptian hieroglyphic for an impossibility was the figure of two feet walking upon the sea. Jesus comes down from the mount of prayer, to still the boisterous lake and relieve his endangered disciples.

26. *It is a spirit*, i. e. a spectre, apparition. The ancients believed that the spirits of the departed reappeared to the living; and the unusual circumstances under which

Digitized by Google

saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying: It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus 27 spake unto them saying: Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said: Lord, if it be 28 thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said: Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he 29 walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the 30 wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying: Lord, save me! And immediately Jesus 31

they saw the figure of a man on the billows, in the darkness of the night, at once suggested that here was such an appearance, the most appalling in nature.

27. *It is I; be not afraid.* Jesus does not attempt to correct their philosophical error respecting ghosts, but simply to banish their fears. In like manner, he did not disabuse his hearers of the popular but false notions of possessions by demons. We have an illustration in this narrative of the terror produced by superstition.

"When power divine, in mortal form,
Hushed with a word the raging storm,
In soothing accents, Jesus said,
'Lo! it is I! be not afraid.'

"Blessed be the voice which breathes from heaven,
To every heart in sunder riven,
When love, and joy, and hope are fled,
'Lo! it is I! be not afraid.'

"And when the last dread hour shall come,
While shuddering nature waits her doom,
This voice shall call the pious dead:
'Lo! it is I! be not afraid.'"

28. *If it be thou, bid me come unto thee, &c.* Peter, with his characteristic impetuosity, as soon as he recovered from his fear, gives loose to his ardor, and wishes to be better assured that it was Jesus. He was tempted, perhaps, also, to exhibit his faith ostentatiously. In the individuality of character which is preserved of all those persons introduced into the New Testament, we have a proof, of immeasurable and undeveloped strength, of the truth of the book.

29. *He said: Come.* Our Lord gave permission to his rash and ardent disciple to make the attempt, principally, we may conjecture, in order to test his character, and acquaint him with its weaknesses. — *Walked on the water, &c.* It appears that Peter succeeded for a time, and actually walked upon the fluid surface, as upon a solid floor.

30. *But when he saw the wind boisterous, &c.* He was terrified by the rough appearance of the sea, and began to sink, though he still retained faith enough in Jesus to call upon him to rescue him. "Whilst he believed, the sea was brass; when he began to distrust, those waves were water." But his want of faith was the occasion, not the cause, of his sinking. As long as his confidence continued, he was sustained by supernatural power; but when it ceased, that power was withdrawn by the will of Jesus, to teach his disciple his own defective character, and the necessity of unwavering faith in him. This whole account is in perfect keeping with Peter's character, as elsewhere recorded in the New Testament. All his bold and headlong acts are kindred to each other. It is the same spirit under different circumstances; first rash, then "easily daunted, and prone to fall." We are led to

Digitized by Google

stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him:
32 O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when
33 they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying: Of a truth thou art the Son of God.
34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of
35 Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge

remark, how many persons in life sink in the sea of troubles and difficulties, for lack of faith. A distinguished lady, who exhibited uncommon force of character, and steady devotion to noble objects, once observed, that she drew, in her youth, a vital lesson of the importance of courage and faith, from this narrative.

31. *Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, &c.* There was no real danger of his drowning, while such a friend was near him. His call for help is instantly answered, and he is taught the feebleness of his own faith. — *Wherefore didst thou doubt?* The Greek for *doubt* is taken from a word descriptive of a person's standing where two ways meet, hesitating which to choose, inclining sometimes to the one and sometimes to the other, with a doubtful, swaying motion, as of a balance. "Christ's mild rebuke, so unlike the denunciations which his professed followers in other ages have launched at what they have been pleased to call, but could not with certainty know to be deficiencies of faith, that mild rebuke from him who did know all things, was the only punishment for the failing faith of the disciple. 'Wherefore didst thou doubt?' wherefore, after seeing what thou hast seen, and hearing what thou hast heard, couldst thou doubt?"

32. *The wind ceased.* Was hushed or lulled. He who could walk upon the waves could by the same power calm the winds and smooth the waters. John mentions that the ship arrived immediately at its destination, vi. 21.

33. *They that were in the ship.* Probably the disciples. — *Worshipped him.* They did not offer Christ divine worship, of which there is no example in ancient times, and for which there is no authority in modern, but they did him obeisance, probably by prostrating themselves before him, according to the eastern custom of paying respect to kings and great men. Mark describes their amazement as great, and assigns as one cause of it, that, hardened in their hearts, they had forgotten the miracle of the loaves. — *The Son of God*, i. e. the Messiah. Matt. xxvi. 63; John i. 49. If Jesus Christ was God himself, is it not incredible, that they should never have suspected that he was God, or addressed him thus, but called him the Son of God, or the expected Messiah?

34. *The land of Gennesaret.* Called, in the Old Testament, Chinnereth. Deut. iii. 17; Numb. xxxiv. 11; 1 Kings xv. 20. It was a small district of Lower Galilee, adjacent to the lake, on the western side. It was sometimes called, on this account, the lake of Gennesaret. The towns of Capernaum and Tiberias were situated in this territory. Hence, John vi. 17, says, they "went over the sea, toward Capernaum," and Mark vi. 45, that they were to go to Bethsaida, which was on the west side, in the same region. From Bethsaida, on the east

Digitized by Google

of him, they sent out into all that country round about; and 36
brought unto him all that were diseased, and besought him that
they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many
as touched were made perfectly whole.

CHAPTER XV.

Jesus condemns the Traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, cures the Daughter of the Canaanitish Woman, and feeds Four Thousand.

THEN came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of 1
Jerusalem, saying: Why do thy disciples transgress the tra- 2
dition of the elders? for they wash not their hands, when they

---

of the lake, they go to the land of Gennesaret, containing the towns of Capernaum and Bethsaida on the west. How shall we account for the geographical accuracy with which the Evangelists wrote, otherwise than by supposing that they were contemporaneous with the events they describe, and competent to give an independent and exact narrative?

35. *Had knowledge of him.* Knew him, for Jesus had performed miracles there before, and taught in the neighborhood. The daughter of Jairus had been cured in the vicinity, and the diseased woman also came behind him trembling and touched the hem of his garment, which may incidentally account for the request in the next verse.

36. *Might only touch the hem of his garment*, i. e. the fringe or tassel of the outer garment. They asked but the smallest favor of his miraculous power, confident that that would be sufficient for their relief. — *As many as touched were made perfectly whole.* Not by any inherent virtue in the garment, but through the distinct volition and exercise of miraculous power by Jesus himself.

Every chapter contains some lesson of truth, or pleadings of love, or motives to duty. We are in this reminded, by the death of John the Baptist, of the persecutions and martyrdoms which have in every age befallen the most illustrious servants of God. The world has hated and killed them because they were not of the world. Yet their memories flourish green in all ages, and twine themselves deep around the affections of the human heart. What a posthumous kingdom over the wills and sentiments of their race!

Whilst the miracles of Christ win our assent to his divine authority, they should impregnate our breasts with the feelings of divine benevolence. They as much concern our hearts as our heads.

CHAP. XV.

1 – 29. Parallel to Mark vii. 1 – 31.

1. *Scribes and Pharisees.* See note on Matt. iii. 7, v. 20. — *Of Jerusalem.* Belonging to Jerusalem. A deputation had been sent from the metropolis, where the most learned men resided, perhaps with the express design of watching Jesus, whose fame had spread abroad from one end of the country to the other. He was at this time in Galilee, as mentioned in the last chapter.

2. *Transgress the tradition of the elders?* The elders are those dis-

Digitized by Google

3 eat bread. But he answered and said unto them: Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God, by your tradition?

tinguished for their wisdom and virtue, who had flourished in the past ages of the Jewish commonwealth. Their wise sayings and maxims relative to the Mosaic law and institutions had acquired, in the course of time, great authority among the Jews. They were attributed to Moses, who, it was said, received from God an oral, as well as a written law, at Mount Sinai. The oral communications were explanatory of the written laws. They were said to have been given by Moses to Aaron and his posterity, passing from one to another, through priests, prophets, and rabbins, to Rabbi Judah, in the second century of the Christian era, who committed to writing the *traditions*, as the oral law was called, which existed in the time of Christ and are referred to in the text, and thus formed what is now called the Mishna, which means miscellanies. This volume contains explanations of all the precepts of the Mosaic law. About a century after, another Jewish Rabbi, Jochanan, composed another volume, supplementary to the Mishna, called Gemara, i. e. completion or perfection, which contains illustrations and comments on the Mishna. These two, the Mishna and the Jewish Gemara, compose the Jerusalem Talmud. Long after, Rabbi Asa composed the Talmud of Babylon, in a celebrated Jewish school near that city. This consists of the aforesaid Mishna as the text, and a new Gemara as commentary or supplement. These works are all written in the Hebrew language, and are even in higher estimation among the Jews than the Scripture itself. In these Talmuds is found the Cabala, or mystical method of explaining the law, by which abstruse and mysterious significations are formed by ingenious combinations of letters composing a word or words in the law. The criminality, in the judgment of the Scribes and Pharisees, of transgressing any precept of the elders may be estimated from these sentences in their writings: — "The words of the Scribes are lovely above the words of the law, for the words of the law are weighty and light, but the words of the Scribes are all weighty:" "The words of the elders are weightier than the words of the prophets:" "The written law is narrow, but the traditional is longer than the earth and broader than the sea." The Jews compared the Bible to water, the Mishna to wine, and the Gemara to hippocras. — *Wash not their hands, when they eat bread.* Or, eat food. The Scribes and Pharisees, according to Mark, had already observed that the disciples ate bread with unwashen hands. In the Talmudical writings, there are many minute and ridiculous directions given respecting washing the hands, upon the ground that some uncleanness may be contracted. He was thought worthy of excommunication and even death, who broke the custom. An evil spirit, called Shibta, was said to sit on the food of him who ate without washing, and to make the food hurtful. A story is related in the Talmud of a man's perishing in prison, because, part of the water brought him being spilt, he preferred using the rest rather to wash than to drink. — Mark, writing for the benefit of the Gentiles, goes into a fuller account of the ceremonies of washing than Matthew, who was writing for the Jews, where these customs were known.

3. *Transgress the commandment of God, by your tradition?* Jesus

Digitized by Google

For God commanded, saying: "Honor thy father and mother;" 4
and: "He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death."
But ye say: Whosoever shall say to *his* father or *his* mother: 5
***It is* a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;**
and honor not his father or his mother, *he shall be free.* Thus 6

did not commence with a vindication of his disciples, for the observance had the sanction of great authority among the Jews; but he first destroyed the very foundation on which their reasoning depended. He showed that in their adherence to the traditions of men they were guilty of violating the commandments of God. His answer was virtually: You accuse my disciples, and through them me, of violating the traditions of the elders; but I will point out a case, where, by these very traditions you value so much, you transgress the infinitely higher laws of God. You are the most guilty, for you break the moral law.

4. For example: *Honor thy father and mother, &c.* This was the fifth commandment. Ex. xx. 12, xxi. 17; Lev. xix. 3. This precept included not only filial respect, but also a proper care and maintenance of parents. For instances of this sense of the word *honor*, see 1 Tim. v. 3, 17. — *Curseth.* Revileth. — *Die the death*, i. e. let him surely die. Ex. xxi. 17. We learn from this verse the high and holy nature of the filial obligations. All the attentions of children never can repay the debt of gratitude which they owe those from whom they derived their being, their education, and the comforts and blessings of early life. Reverence, love, and obedience, so far as parental commands are right, are, by the laws of natural and revealed religion, obligatory upon children, and the contrary is prohibited under the most awful penalties. If aged and infirm, or poor, parents are to be taken care of by their offspring, their last days to be made comfortable and happy, and the descent to the grave smoothed by filial sympathy and attention.

5. *But ye say.* He contrasts their iniquitous sayings with the divine commandments. — *It is a gift.* Mark says, "It is *Corban*, that is to say, a gift," something devoted to the service of God. If a Jew wished to evade the duty of supporting his parents, he might, according to the doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees, the tradition of the elders, devote his property to the treasury of the Lord, or place it in the hands of the priests. He would then say to his parents, My property is Corban, a gift sacred to God, so far as you might be profited by it. He was said to be free accordingly from the obligation of providing for the wants of his father and mother. Thus, under the guise of a false piety, the command of God was disobeyed. Some commentators suppose, that what they refused to their parents was not actually devoted to a sacred purpose, but by the use of the word Corban, or by taking a rash oath or vow, they represented that it was alienated from the use of their parents as much as if it had been given to God, which seems as rational an interpretation, and one that is countenanced by the different vows of obligation or prohibition in the Talmudic books, as Lightfoot has shown on this passage. — Jesus would not censure the practice of giving to religious objects; but he would condemn the practice of thus giving at the expense of violating the filial obligations.

6. *He shall be free.* These words

Digitized by Google

have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your
7 tradition. *Ye* hypocrites! well did Esaias prophesy of you,
8 saying: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth,
and honoreth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.
9 But in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the
10 commandments of men." —— And he called the multitude, and
11 said unto them: Hear, and understand. Not that which goeth

in Italics are not in the original, but are introduced by the translators; the sense would be unimpaired if they were omitted. The whole might read thus, as Wakefield has translated it: — "A man may say to his father or mother, that is an offering to God (by which I might have profited thee), and so honor not his father or his mother." — *Of none effect by your tradition.* By this wicked subterfuge they really, though not expressly, nullified the fifth commandment.

7. *Ye hypocrites.* Ye false pretenders, ostensibly keeping the commandments, but in reality setting them aside to make room for your own traditions. — *Esaias.* Is. xxix. 13, where there is a difference in language from the passage here quoted, since this was taken from the Greek Septuagint and not from the original Hebrew. The declaration of Isaiah is introduced, not as implying the fulfilment of a prophecy, but as a description given by the prophet of the people of his time, which was applicable to the Jews of that period. — *Prophecy of you.* Of such as you.

8. *Draweth nigh unto me with their mouth.* The orthodox critic Griesbach has omitted this sentence in his celebrated and accurate edition of the New Testament. The formal lip-worship prevalent in the time of Isaiah was chargeable upon the Jews of Christ's age. The Scribes and Pharisees were full of good professions, scrupulous in meats and drinks, and punctilious in all external observances, but the love of God had died out of their hearts, and left them cold and hollow. No spirit of devotion burned within.

9. All worship is necessarily in vain, if it spring not from a heart obedient to God. He who is subservient to the will of man, or to human institutions, in opposition to God's laws, by that very state of mind disqualifies himself for offering acceptable worship, which implies by the very act a supreme regard to the Being who is worshipped. — By these direct and searching applications of truth to their consciences, Jesus gave them mortal offence, and so stung their pride that they were never satisfied until they saw him upon the cross.

10. *He called the multitude.* Turning from the Scribes and Pharisees, he now addressed the people at large. Thus far he had been engaged in rebutting the charge against his disciples, because they ate with unwashen hands, by an *argumentum ad hominem* to the Pharisees, who, in their eagerness to observe human institutions, broke the divine commandments; thus undermining the very ground of their accusation. In a more public address to the whole people, he proceeds to attack the formal observances upon which the Jews plumed themselves so highly, as being wholly empty and worthless without inward purity. — *Hear, and understand.* He awakens their attention by reminding them of their duty to listen candidly and

Digitized by Google

into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. —— Then came his disciples, 12 and said unto him: Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and 13 said: Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they be blind leaders of 14 the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Then answered Peter and said unto him: Declare 15

---

endeavor to understand his instructions.

11. *Not that which goeth into the mouth, &c.* This refers back to verse 2, where they had objected to the disciples because they ate with unwashen hands. Jesus would not destroy the law which authorized a distinction of meats, but he asserts that nothing is naturally unclean, or could defile a human mind; but that regard was chiefly to be paid to the thoughts, intentions, and words coming out of a man. These it was that had power to stain his purity.

12. *Were offended.* Were scandalized. They were indignant, that the veil of hypocrisy should be torn off and their idle pretentions to holiness exposed to contempt. They did not venture openly to denounce Jesus, but the disciples observed that they had taken offence. The question of the disciples carries the impression that they regretted that the Pharisees were offended, thinking it necessary, perhaps, to propitiate their favor, in order to establish their Master's kingdom.

13. *Every plant.* Every plantation, according to many critics, referring to the Scribes and Pharisees as a body, who would be overthrown by the advance of truth; or, as is more likely, erroneous doctrines and customs are meant. It was the business of our Lord to extirpate these, to make way for the truth. We have the promise of Jesus that these in due time shall, by the reformation of the world and the elevation of the church, be finally rooted up. Truth is great, and it will eventually prevail. There are many plants in the Christian church, unscriptural doctrines, idle rites, and groundless pretensions, which cannot abide the searching investigation of free and independent minds. It becomes us, therefore, abandoning all other foundations, to repose upon Christ, the corner-stone, fearless of the future.

"Nought endures but thou, O Lord;
Everlasting is thy word!
Thou, the first, the midst, the end;
Thou, the deathless, changeless friend:
Grant us, Lord, beyond the skies,
Flowers whose fragrance never dies."

14. *Let them alone.* Have done with them. Have nothing to do with their doctrine, dread not their opposition. It is to be expected that they will be enraged at those who endeavor to convict them of their errors. — *Blind leaders of the blind.* A proverbial expression common to the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, and aptly illustrating the point our Lord wished to convey. The common people were blind through ignorance. The Scribes and Pharisees, their guides, were blind through perversity and hypocrisy. The consequence of one leading the other would be, that both would go astray and fall into destruction. — *Ditch.* More properly, *pit*, which was dug to hold water in a country exposed to severe drought.

Digitized by Google

16 unto us this parable. And Jesus said: Are ye also yet without
17 understanding? Do not ye yet understand that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out
18 into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the
19 mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts; murders, adulteries,
20 fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are *the things* which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

21 Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of
22 Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out

---

15. *Then answered Peter.* Here again is inwoven in the history a bright thread of reality, in the characteristic representation of this disciple as the spokesman of the company. The slighter such an incident, the greater the evidence of undesignedness, nature, and truth. — *Declare unto us this parable.* Explain your maxim or figure, which had been given in verse 11. The word *parable* is used with a considerable latitude of meaning. See note on Matt. xiii. 3.

16. *Are ye also yet without understanding?* Still without understanding. He appeals to their common sense. You must be obtuse indeed, after all my instructions, not to understand my comparison.

17. Food enters the bodily system, but not the spiritual constitution, Mark vii. 19, and consequently does not affect the character.

18. But what is spoken comes from the abundance of the heart, and that defiles the character. As a poet says: —

"Our outward act is prompted from within,
And from the sinner's mind proceeds the sin."

Christ in this passage taught, in opposition to the Pharisees, 1st, that outward things do not pollute the character; and 2d, that evil words and thoughts, coming from the heart, defile the man.

19. Jesus proceeds to give a catalogue of those things which corrupt a man. — *Evil thoughts.* Or, purposes. He then particularizes what deeds they prompt. — *Blasphemies.* Calumnies, or, if it relates to the Creator, impious expressions. Mark mentions not only the acts, but the evil qualities, covetousness, wickedness or malice, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, pride, foolishness.

20. *Unwashen hands.* This refers back to verse 2, where the disciples were accused of eating without washing their hands. It was no sin to neglect an empty form. Jesus encouraged no superstitious or idle ceremonies, but what is real, rational, and indispensable.

21. *Into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.* Or, towards the borders of Tyre and Sidon, for it does not appear with certainty that he ever left the country of Judea. His object in retiring to that region was probably to escape from the importunity of the Scribes and Pharisees, or the snares of Herod. This supposition is strengthened by what is said in Mark, that he would have no man know the place where he was. On Tyre and Sidon see note, Matt. xii. 22.

22. *Woman of Canaan.* Palestine was formerly called Canaan. Perhaps she was a descendant of

Digitized by Google

of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying: Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And 23 his disciples came and besought him, saying: Send her away, for she crieth after us. But he answered and said: I am not 24 sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then 25 came she and worshipped him, saying: Lord, help me! But 26 he answered and said: It is not meet to take the children's

---

the ancient Canaanites. Mark vii. 26, she is termed "a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation." This country had been conquered and governed by the Greeks under Alexander the Great. Besides the Jews gave the name of Greek to all who belonged not to their own nation. The region in which Tyre and Sidon were situated was called Phœnicia, and was included in the more general name of Syria. Hence the inhabitants were Syrophœnicians, as distinguished from the Phœnicians of Libya, or Carthaginians. — *Coasts.* Borders. — *Son of David.* She might have learned this epithet of the Messiah from the multitude around him, and his beneficent power to cure the sick. — *Vexed with a devil.* A demon. See note on Matt. iv. 24. The Jews ascribed all inveterate diseases to the agency of demons, or the disembodied spirits of wicked men.

23. *He answered her not a word.* The disciples, imbued with the prejudices of their countrymen, would have been offended had he immediately granted her request; but by deferring the matter, they themselves, moved by her pathos, join with her in supplicating his aid. — *Send her away*, i. e. dismiss her, satisfy her, or despatch her business; whereas the common version makes it appear that they would have him send her away disappointed of her object. So far from it, her eloquent grief overcame their rooted dislike to the Gentiles, and they became co-pleaders with her.

24. *Lost sheep of the house of Israel.* An image of a flock without a shepherd, bewildered and exposed to the ravages of wild beasts. The ministry of Jesus was specially devoted to the Jews, as the nation that had been particularly educated by God to maintain his pure worship. Still, he preached to the Samaritans, he cured the servant of a Roman, and the daughter of a Greek, and thus intimated, not doubtfully, that his religion was a gift from Heaven to all men. But this and the other objections Jesus made to the woman's petition may be understood, as has been truly suggested, rather as an expression of what was passing in the minds of his disciples, than of his own disinclination to relieve the Gentile. He wished to overcome their prejudices, and bring back their hearts to nature and to truth, by exhibiting her sublime faith, which would not have been manifested had he at once granted her prayer.

25. *Worshipped him.* Notwithstanding her seeming repulse, strong in her maternal heart, she throws herself in a supplicant posture at his feet with the new entreaty, "Lord, help me!" Beautiful instance of persevering faith!

26. *It is not meet, &c.* Or, fit or right. We may suppose Jesus here expresses less his own sentiment than that of the disciples and the

Digitized by Google

27 bread, and to cast *it* to dogs. And she said: Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's
28 table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her: O woman, great *is* thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

29 And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the Sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down
30 there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them *those that were* lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many

---

multitude. He assumes for the moment their style of speech. The Jews regarded themselves as the children of God, and they hesitated not to call all other nations sinners, dogs, and every thing most opprobrious. This seemingly harsh language is softened, therefore, when we know that words, highly offensive when first used, in time lose their rudeness, and sink into mere terms of designation. The manner and look of Jesus, as we learn from the sequel, were such as not to intimidate, but encourage the woman. The diminutive also is used in the original, meaning *little dogs*, which bespeaks likewise a mildness of address.

27. *The dogs eat of the crumbs, &c.* Never was an answer more apropos and ingenious. I acknowledge, she says, the force of your words, and I ask but for the crumbs, which the dogs have by right of custom, that fall from the abundant table spread for the entertainment of the Jews. Jesus effected his purpose, and exhibited her humility and faith, in their native grace and constancy, to the admiration of his disciples.

28. *Great is thy faith.* Or, confidence in my power and disposition to aid thee. This eulogy would appear the more remarkable to the bystanders, because he had just applied to her the common term of Jewish contempt. If such faith was found among the *dogs*, what ought to be expected of the *children*? Does not Jesus, in this sentence, already intimate that Gentile as well as Jew would be admitted to the highest favors of his kingdom? — *Whole from that very hour.* According to Mark, the mother found her daughter already restored, when she returned home. The cure was instantaneous, and therefore miraculous. It was at a distance, and must therefore have taken place without artifice or concert. The disease, in all probability, was a mental one, and, from its mysteriousness and difficulty of treatment, attributed to demons. "The case of the Canaanitish woman is in itself a thousand sermons. Her faith, her prayers, her perseverance, her success, the honor she received from her Lord, &c., &c., how instructively, how powerfully, do these speak and plead! They that seek shall find, is the great lesson inculcated in this short history."

29. *Came nigh unto the Sea of Galilee.* On the eastern coast, in the region of Decapolis, as we learn from Mark.—*Into a mountain.* According to the original, *the* mountain, i. e. the ridge of mountains surrounding the lake, or some well known eminence in particular.

30. See note on Matt. iv. 24. — *Maimed*, i. e. those, according to Wetstein and Wakefield, who had lost a limb. Matt. xviii. 8, where

Digitized by Google

others; and cast them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them; insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw 31
the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see; and they glorified the God of Israel. —— Then Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and said: I have 32
compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. And his disci- 33
ples say unto him: Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus 34
saith unto them: How many loaves have ye? And they said: Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multi- 35

---

the halt or maimed is he whose hand or foot has been cut off. What a striking manifestation of divine power to reproduce a lost limb!

31. In this place, Mark, instead of giving a general summary of Christ's miracles, like Matthew, inserts a particular instance of the cure of the deaf person who had an impediment in his speech. Although the Scribes and Pharisees played a captious and cavilling part towards Jesus, yet the great mass accorded him their faith and admiration, and praised God, who had raised up for them so mighty a prophet. Though his miracles were so astonishing, the thought never appears to have crossed their minds, that he was any other than a being endowed by God with wonderful gifts. That belief, so awful and abhorrent to a Jewish mind, but so prevalent in Christendom, that Jesus was God himself, was totally unknown at that time; for they glorified, not Jesus, but the God of Israel.

32–39. See Mark viii. 1–10.

32. *And have nothing to eat.* Not that they had been three days without food, or as is probably meant, one day with a part of the day preceding and that succeeding, but that they had exhausted their provisions. Jesus, like a true shepherd, manifests an active sympathy with their suffering condition, and is prompted by benevolence, even more than by a desire to substantiate his authority, to perform the stupendous act of multiplying food to a vast amount. "O, the faith and zeal of these clients of Christ! They not only follow him from the city into the desert, from delicacy to want, from frequence to solitude, but forget their bodies in pursuit of the food for their souls. Such sweetness did these hearers find in the spiritual repast, that they thought not on the bodily."

33. *His disciples say unto him, &c.* It is remarkable that they should have so soon forgotten the miraculous multiplication of bread related in chap. xiv. 17–21, but their hardness of heart may have caused the obliteration of that impression. Or, they may not have doubted Christ's power, but only whether he would then *choose* to exert it. Or again, we may suppose *we* emphatic. *We* cannot supply their wants, but *you* have the power; — a hint to remind him of what they wished him to do. It is a decisive mark of the truthfulness of the history, that no attempt is made to explain this and other difficulties. Confidence is re-

Digitized by Google

36 tude to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves
and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake *them*, and gave to
37 his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did
all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the broken *meat*
38 that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were
39 four thousand men, beside women and children. And he sent
away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts
of Magdala.

CHAPTER XVI.

Jesus refuses to give the Scribes and Pharisees a Sign. The Confession of Peter. Jesus predicts his approaching Fate and future Glory.

THE Pharisees also, with the Sadducees, came, and, tempt-

---

posed in the candor of the reader. The remarks made upon the preceding miracle of the same kind are applicable here, and require not to be repeated.

35. *To sit down*, i. e. to recline, as was the custom at meals.

36. *Gave thanks.* Jesus was filled with a living spirit of devotion and love to God, which was manifested upon every occasion, whether joyful or sorrowful. The fountain of piety welled up in his heart with streams ever fresh and pure. He has set us an example of thanking God for our temporal as well as our spiritual blessings.

37. *Broken meat that was left.* Economy should be practised in the midst of the greatest abundance. The smallest of the Divine gifts is not to be wasted. What is squandered in the extravagance of the luxurious, and the excesses of the sensual, would suffice to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and relieve the sick. Christ would teach his followers to be frugal, that they might be benevolent.

38. It is observed by Priestley, that the history of this miracle must be a true account of the Evangelists, for it is less in magnitude than the preceding; the number of persons fed being less, the quantity of provisions greater, and what remained not so much. Whereas, if it had been a fiction, they would have made some advances on the preceding one, so that the latter should have appeared the more wonderful of the two.

39. *Coasts.* Borders of Magdala. In Mark viii. 10, it is Dalmanutha. These places were probably situated near each other, in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee, on the western shore. To be in the neighbourhood of one was also to be in the neighbourhood of the other, which is all that *coasts* or parts imply. Our information respecting these places is rather uncertain and contradictory. Mary Magdalene derived her cognomen from Magdala, of which she was probably a native or an inhabitant.

CHAP. XVI.

1 – 12. Parallel to Mark viii. 11 – 21. Matthew's account is more full than that of Mark. A similar narration is given in Matt. xii. 38 – 42.

1. *Pharisees and Sadducees.* For an account of these sects, see note on Matt. iii. 7. Though hostile to each other, they agreed in their opposition to Jesus. — *Tempting.*

Digitized by Google

ing, desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.
He answered and said unto them: When it is evening, ye say: 2
It will be fair weather; for the sky is red. And in the morn- 3
ing: *It will be* foul weather to-day; for the sky is red and
lowering. O *ye* hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the
sky, but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times? A wicked 4
and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there
shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.
And he left them, and departed.

And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had 5
forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them: Take 6

Trying or testing. The Evangelists pass no judgments on the motives of these persons, as the English word tempting would imply, but simply state the fact that they questioned him. Mark viii. 11.—*A sign from heaven.* See note on Matt. xii. 38. Notwithstanding our Saviour performed so many astonishing miracles, they demand something more; some wonder in the heavens, similar to those exhibited by the old prophets. Ex. xvi. 4; 1 Sam. xii. 18; Isa. xxxviii. 8. It is supposed that Josephus refers to this desire for wonders, where he says, that "there were impostors in the time of Agrippa, who went before the people into the wilderness, pretending that God would there show the signals of liberty." Signs from heaven were indeed afterwards exhibited, of the most appalling nature, to attest Christ's authority, the sun being darkened three hours on the day of his crucifixion. Are there not many now who overlook the evidences of religion that lie under their notice, and demand such as, from the nature of the case, are impossible?

2, 3. The ancients, as we learn both from Jewish and classic authority, were skilful in prognosticating the weather. This was done, as at the present day, by observing the signs of the sky, the appearances of the clouds and the heavenly bodies. The import of our Saviour's reproof is, that they were ingenious in predicting the weather from the signs in the heavens, but that they could not understand the signs of the times, the miracles which came from the sky or descended from the God of heaven, and which authenticated his divine commission.—*Foul weather.* A familiar expression for a storm.—*Hypocrites.* A term descriptive of the general character of the Pharisees, rather than as having any particular application in this place.—*Discern.* Discriminate, judge of.

4. See note on Matt. xii. 39. This was his uniform reply, that no mightier evidence would be afforded of his authority from God, than his death and resurrection, shortly to take place at Jerusalem; a sign, not from the sky, but from the earth. Mark states, that he said this with the profoundest emotion; that "he *sighed deeply* in his spirit." How could it have been otherwise, when he saw their obduracy and incurable wickedness?

5. *Were come to the other side.* Were coming, or were on their way to, the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Mark has here a delicate lineament of nature and truth, as he

Digitized by Google

heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the
7 Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying:
8 *It is* because we have taken no bread. *Which* when Jesus perceived, he said unto them: O ye of little faith, why reason
9 ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the
10 five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye
11 took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the
12 leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he

---

qualifies the expression, "they had forgotten to take bread," by saying, that *they had but one loaf with them.*

6. *Leaven.* Both good and bad doctrines were compared to leaven, which silently diffuses itself throughout the mass in which it is mixed. 1 Cor. v. 6, 7. In Mark viii. 15, "the leaven of Herod" is spoken of, by which is probably meant, the doctrine of the Herodians or partisans of Herod, which was as pernicious, in a political point of view, as that of the Pharisees and Sadducees was in a religious aspect. There is ever some leaven of error working around us in society, happily if not in the Christian church, against which we ought to be upon our guard.

7. We have here an evidence of the exceeding backwardness of the disciples to understand the figurative language of their Master. Has not a similar dulness of apprehending the metaphors of Scripture prevailed in all ages? They supposed, that, in their destitution of bread, Jesus was unwilling that they should buy loaves of the Pharisees and Sadducees, for fear that they should be contaminated.

8–11. *Of little faith.* Distrustful of my power, or of Divine Providence. He reminds them of the late repeated miracles, by which many thousands had been miraculously supplied with food. Matt. xiv. 21; xv. 38. According to Mark viii. 17, 18, he reproves them sharply for their stupidity.

12. At last, their minds were opened to its meaning. But the event is an instructive one, as it presents a picture of their spiritual obtuseness, and want of insight, which continued until they were supernaturally inspired on the day of Pentecost, notwithstanding our Saviour's most assiduous and patient instructions. — *Then.* After all these explanations. — *Doctrine.* Implies their practices as well as their tenets; the superstition, cant, and hypocrisy of the Pharisees; and the denial of a Providence, and a future life, and the pride of the Sadducees.

13–28. Parallel to Mark viii. 27–38; ix. 1; and Luke ix. 18–27.

13. *Came.* Was coming, or, as

Digitized by Google

asked his disciples, saying: Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said: Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them: But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him: 14 15 16 17

Mark expresses it, viii. 27, "by the way." — *Coasts.* Borders. According to Mark, "towns," or villages, lying around and dependent on the city. — *Cæsarea Philippi.* A city of Upper Galilee, near the source of the Jordan, at the foot of Mount Hermon. It is supposed to have occupied the site of the ancient town of Laish, afterwards called Dan. Judg. xviii. 29. The Phœnicians also called it Paneas; and its modern name is Banias. The name of *Cæsarea* was given it in honor of Tiberius Cæsar, the Roman emperor, and that of *Philippi*, after Philip, the tetrarch, who rebuilt and embellished it, and to distinguish it from another Cæsarea, a city on the coast of the Mediteranean. It was about thirty miles north from the Sea of Galilee, and 115 from Jerusalem, and was probably the most distant place from that city which Jesus ever visited. — *Whom.* Grammatical correctness requires *who.* — *The Son of Man*, i. e. the man by eminence, the man that excites such curiosity and wonder. The motives of Jesus, in thus questioning his disciples, will better appear, if we consider that his conduct must have perplexed them. Instead of suffering himself to be proclaimed king, he was privately fleeing from the tyrant who had killed his forerunner, and seeking retirement. To clear up the obscurity, and prepare their minds for his approaching fate, he enters upon this conversation, and draws from them their confession that he was the Messiah or Christ; and then warns them to be faithful in following him, though they had to carry the cross itself, and opens visions of a higher than any earthly glory upon their dismayed eyes. Verses 21, 24, 28.

14. *John the Baptist, &c.* These views of Christ's person were all founded upon substantially the same ground, the belief in the transmigration of souls, which appears to have been prevalent at that time. See notes on Matt. xi. 14, and xiv. 2. Those who were not ready to admit that Jesus was the Messiah, might yet recognise him as his precursor. It is said, that there was a Jewish tradition, that Jeremiah would precede the advent of the Messiah, and dig up those vessels which it was supposed he had buried, and restore, in all its ancient splendor, the temple worship. 2 Maccabees, ii. 1 – 9.

15. The question here asked shows, that Jesus had not expressly told the Jews that he was the Messiah, but left it to be inferred from his works and his words.

16. *Simon Peter answered.* This was in harmony with his ardent temperament. — *Christ, the Son of the living God.* This described the person and office of Christ, and the power from on high with which he was invested. It was the joint confession of the disciples, expressed through Peter. *Christ* should have the article prefixed to it as in the original; *the* Christ, the Messiah. It is observable that Peter's testimony is, that Jesus is the Son of God, and not God himself. The

Digitized by Google

Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not
18 **revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven. And**
I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I
will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail

phraseology of the answer is slightly varied in the other Evangelists. The epithet *living*, as applied to God, signifies real, true, in distinction from idols and false gods, that were not living beings. Is it not an incidental evidence of the truthfulness of Mark's Gospel, who is supposed to have written from Peter's dictation or aid, according to early tradition, that the commendation of Peter by Christ is omitted, as if through modesty?

17. *Simon Bar-jona.* The latter was a Syriac word, meaning the son of Jona. John i. 42. As Furness remarks, "How naturally, when a friend communicates any unexpected sentiment or intelligence, do we express our surprise in a similar way, uttering the whole name of our friend, with fervent emphasis!" —*Flesh and blood.* A Hebrew circumlocution for *man*. Gal. i. 16. — *But my Father, &c.* Human wisdom or authority (in allusion, perhaps, to the Scribes and Pharisees) has not revealed this truth to you, but you have arrived at it, because, in the providence of God, you became my disciple, witnessed my divine works, and yielded to the natural influences of God's spirit upon your soul.

18. *Thou art Peter.* Or, *a* Peter. Thou art rightly named Peter; which signifies, in the original Greek, *rock*.—*And upon this rock I will build, &c.* The necessity of building houses in Judea on a rock foundation rendered this figure a graphic one to the Jews. See Rev. xxi. 14; Eph. ii. 20, where the apostles and prophets are called the foundation, and Christ the cornerstone. Some have supposed that Jesus, in saying that he would build his church upon this rock, meant Peter's confession that he was the Christ; others, that he meant himself; but the most obvious reference is to Peter. He was to be a foundation, as he first preached the Gospel to the Gentiles, and took a prominent part also in spreading it among the Jews. As the first, firmest, and most energetic among the Twelve, he might without invidiousness be called a main rock in the foundation of the church. But that no peculiar and exclusive privilege was granted to Peter above the other disciples, as maintained by the church of Rome, is evident from a comparison of the following passages: Matt. xviii. 18, xx. 26; Acts xv., and Gal. ii. 11. Besides, if any peculiar authority had been vested in Peter more than in the other Apostles, no countenance would have been given to the papal supremacy, for the prerogative would have been personal and incommunicable.—*The gates of hell.* Or, of Hades, the abode or world of the dead, without reference to happiness or misery. See Is. xxxviii. 10, where, in the Septuagint version, *Hades* is translated *grave*. In the gates of ancient cities it was customary to hold courts and public assemblies and consultations. Hence the gates of death mean the designs or power of death. The church shall not die, but be immortal; a prophecy which has been fulfilling for almost twenty centuries. The word *church* is first used in the New Testament in this place. Its original signification was an assembly. The people of Israel are called by this name. Acts vii. 38. It means sometimes the

Digitized by Google

against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom 19
of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be
bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall
be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples, that they 20
should tell no man that he was Jesus, the Christ. —— From 21
that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how
that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the

whole body of Christians, and sometimes a particular society of believers. Eph. i. 22; Acts viii. 1; Rom. xvi. 5. The ancient English version of Tyndale renders it *congregation*. The noble confession of Christ by Peter is an example for all subsequent time; whilst we should beware of being tempted like him to a denial of our Master, we should also avoid adding any human dogmas to the beautiful simplicity of his faith, which comprehended the great essentials.

19. *The keys of the kingdom of heaven*, i. e. the prerogatives of the new dispensation. This, like all figurative expressions, must be interpreted by the subject and purpose of the discourse with which it is connected, and the use of language amongst the hearers. A key was anciently used as a symbol of power and wisdom. Isa. xxii. 22; Rev. iii. 7; Luke xi. 52. When the Jews invested a man with the authority of doctor of the law, they gave him the key of the closet in the temple where the sacred books were kept, to intimate that they intrusted him with power to explain the Scriptures, and teach the people. — *Whatsoever thou shalt bind, &c.* To bind, according to Jewish phraseology, is to *forbid*, and to loose is to *permit*. The force of Christ's words is this: I authorize you to preach my religion, by which what is forbidden and what is permitted is forbidden and permitted in heaven or by God. The word *whatsoever* refers to *things*, to rites or laws which Peter and the Apostles might make or repeal. A similar power with regard to persons is supposed to be conferred on all the Apostles in John xx. 23. For the exercise of both powers, see Acts v. 15, 20; xxi. 24. The same authority here given to Peter is also imparted, Matt. xviii. 18, to all the Twelve. The preëminence of Peter was not absolute, but arose from his distinguished energy and ability, and could not, therefore, from its nature, descend to any successor. Although this is the great Roman Catholic text, when it is thus explained, it affords not the shadow of an argument for the lofty claims of that church.

20. *They should tell no man.* In Luke ix. 21, "he straitly" or strictly "charged them." The reasons of this prohibition have been intimated from time to time in the foregoing passages. Jesus would not give occasion to disturbance and sedition, which would certainly have arisen, had his Apostles at once gone forth to proclaim his Messiahship. The time had not yet come, his ministry was not ended. He therefore holds their enthusiasm in check, and henceforth explains to them more fully, that he is to be not a triumphant, but a suffering deliverer; to be less the Lion of Judah than the Lamb of God. — *Jesus.* This word has no place in the original, according to Griesbach, and other eminent critics.

21. *Began Jesus to show unto his disciples, &c.* It is natural to be-

Digitized by Google

elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be
22 raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began
to rebuke him, saying: Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall
23 not be unto thee. But he turned and said unto Peter: Get
thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou
savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of

---

lieve, that, as the ambition of the disciples had been raised to the highest pitch by the declaration that Jesus was the Messiah, it was his intention to suppress all the expectations of reward and glory which they would indulge, as followers of the great Leader. He, therefore, from that time, more clearly declared, what he had already hinted, Matt. xii. 40, that he was to be put to death at Jerusalem; he would thus prepare their minds beforehand for the coming event. Hence his discourse, as the solemn tragedy draws near, is more and more occupied with allusions to it.

"O, suffering friend of human kind!
How, as the fatal hour drew near,
Came thronging on thy holy mind
The images of grief and fear!

"Gethsemane's sad midnight scene,
The faithless friends, the exulting foes,
The thorny crown, the insult keen,
The scourge, the cross, before thee rose."

— *Must go.* Must is often used to signify, not necessity, but that a thing will come to pass. The prediction here made was fulfilled to the letter, as we shall see in the conclusion of this history. The elders, chief priests, and Scribes, or Jewish Sanhedrim, were chiefly instrumental in effecting this awful catastrophe.

22. *Then Peter took him.* Took him aside, or took him by the hand, as some think; but, as others suppose, took him up, or interrupted him, without allowing him to complete his declaration. Nothing can be more true to nature than this burst of a sanguine temper, after the mind had been teeming with visions of splendor and power. Peter is a representative of the world, that shudders at sufferings and trials, and sees not in them the accomplishment of a more than heroic destiny. — *Be it far from thee.* Literally, God be merciful to thee, which is equivalent to *God forbid*, 1 Chron. xi. 19, where the Septuagint has the same words as here.

23. *He turned.* Mark has it, "turned about and looked on his disciples." Every page of the Evangelists has some inimitable touches of nature. Jesus turned suddenly round, as if started out of his usual equanimity by this untimely familiarity of his disciple, and ready to show how aware he was of the temptation, and how firm and resolved he was to overcome it. — *Satan.* Here is an instance of the freedom with which this word was used among the Jews. It means an adversary, or evil adviser. Such Peter had become to Jesus, by declaring that the lot that he had predicted would not fall upon him. The thoughts which tempted Jesus after his baptism in the wilderness were said to come from Satan, i. e. were evil. — *An offence unto me.* A cause of offence, a snare, a stumbling-block, namely, "by nurturing that natural horror of his painful and ignominious death, which occasionally harassed our Saviour." "How soon is Peter, the rock, turned to an adversary!" — *Thou savorest not the things, &c.*, or approvest or regardest not the things which please God, but those which please men. The views of Peter savored of

Digitized by Google

men. —— Then said Jesus unto his disciples: If any *man* will 24
come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and
follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and 25
whosoever will lose his life, for my sake, shall find it. For 26
what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and
lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for

---

worldliness and ambition, and were inconsistent with the purposes of Heaven; though he was misled by his affection for his Master, as well as by the earthliness of his mind, for he was shocked at the thought of one whom he so loved being put to death. But Jesus would rend away the veil, and show them the certainly coming reality. He would teach them, that "the infant doctrine which was to go through the world, consoling the sorrows of the mourners, and pouring balm into wounded bosoms, was itself first to be nurtured with tears, and baptized in blood."

24. *Will come after me*, i. e. will be my disciple. — *Let him deny himself*. Let him forget himself. Let him be ready to incur the most dreadful sufferings. My disciples must be of such hardihood as to look danger and death, the most dreadful death, in the face. See note on Matt. x. 38. — *Take up his cross*. Crucifixion was a Roman mode of punishment, introduced among the Jews, and was inconceivably agonizing and disgraceful. To add new horrors to it, those who were thus executed were compelled to bear the instrument of their own death to the place of punishment. Hence the imagery of the text, so crushing to the hopes of his followers. How perfectly is the truthfulness of Jesus manifested in his dealing thus frankly with his disciples!

25. See note on Matt. x. 39. The word *life* is here used with a twofold meaning, which fact explains the paradox. He who desires to save his earthly life, at the expense of conscience and fidelity to me, shall lose his spiritual, heavenly life; and he who loses his earthly life, and dies rather than swerve from his rectitude, shall find his true life.

26. *Soul*. This is the same word which in the previous verse is translated life, and such should be its rendering here. The sense is: What would a man be profited, if he should gain the whole world, its riches, honors, and pleasures, and lose his life, the essential condition on which he would possess and enjoy them all? Or as Luke has it, ix. 25, "lose himself." Or what equivalent could one find for his life? But the original word, in a secondary sense, means *soul*, and refers to the future and spiritual existence. That the word is susceptible of both meanings is, according to Campbell, beyond a question. The value of an immortal soul is indicated indeed by the world itself, which, with all its wonders, and riches, and glories, seems to exist chiefly for the sublime purpose of educating human spirits, and preparing them for immortality. How senseless and mad must he be, who confounds the instrument with the end, and barters away himself for the world, or for an insignificant portion of its fleeting possessions or indulgences! Know, O man, that thou art of so great a price, that the world is too poor to buy thee, though its crowns and treasures and mines of gold were put into the balance. Thine im-

Digitized by Google

his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Transfiguration of Jesus.—Miracles.

AND after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

---

mortal spirit outweighs the material universe in the scales of God.

27. Mark and Luke add here, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh," &c. — *Come in the glory of his Father, &c.* Most commentators refer this to the final judgment; but others, with more likelihood, consider it a description of the establishment of Christ's religion with great power and glory in the world. — *With his angels.* Is a Jewish figure to denote the providence of God; as where it is said, "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven," i. e. they are under the special care of God. — *Reward every man according to his works.* Render to every man, &c. When Christianity is established, every man shall be judged by that standard, according to his works, and be condemned or acquitted, as he shall obey or disobey its divine laws.

28. As the spirits of the disciples might well droop by his exhibition, vv. 24–26, of the sufferings to be undergone in behalf of his kingdom, he would encourage them with the brilliant vision of his spiritual power, which was so soon to be firmly enthroned amongst men, that some who were then present would be eyewitnesses of it. — *Shall not taste of death.* A Hebraism for *shall not die.* We know that John at least, and probably many others of the bystanders, was alive about forty years after, when Jerusalem was destroyed, and Judaism was superseded by Christianity, as the visible church and acknowledged religion of God on earth. John xxi. 22, 23. Similar predictions were also made by our Lord, in Matt. xxiv. and xxv.

CHAP. XVII.

1–9. Parallel to Mark ix. 2–9, and Luke ix. 28–36.

1. *After six days.* Luke writes, "About an eight days after," which may not be at variance with Mark and Matthew, but include the two days of the previous conversation and the subsequent transfiguration. The language also purposely conveys the idea of some indefiniteness of time; *about* an eight days after. — *Peter, James, and John his brother.* The first had been called the Rock of the church. The last two were termed Boanerges, or sons of thunder. The three were the most prominent men among the Twelve, — the most devoted and powerful disciples, Gal. ii. 9. They were at other times favored with peculiar privileges by their Master. They were admitted to witness the re-

Digitized by Google

and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as 2
the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, 3
there appeared unto them Moses and Elias, talking with him.

suscitation of the ruler's daughter, Mark v. 37, and accompanied Jesus in his temptation in the garden of Gethsemane, Matt. xxvi. 37. They were a sufficient number, according to the law, to bear witness to any fact. Perhaps the tender sensibility of Jesus shrank from having a greater number accompany him to his retirement and devotions, for his tears upon more than one occasion betokened a susceptible heart. — *An high mountain apart.* Early tradition designated Mount Tabor as the scene of the Transfiguration, though many have supposed that it was Mount Hermon, or Mount Paneus. No data now exist to decide the question. Luke states that his object in going up was to pray, and the mind of Jesus appears not to have been independent of those elevating influences which came from the loneliness and sublimity of such a place. The mountain was his favorite oratory, and the sea his frequent resort.

2. *Was transfigured.* Or changed in the external appearance, not in shape or size. In Luke, it is said, "the fashion of his countenance was altered." His face shone with a peculiar lustre, and his garments became white and glistering. These phenomena, though outward, must have conveyed to the disciples a powerful spiritual impression; for such an appearance was indicative of the Divine presence and favor. It was an ancient opinion, that he designed here to give his disciples a glimpse of that glory promised in Matt. xvi. 27, to fortify their minds against the scandal of the cross.

3. *Moses and Elias.* Elijah. The one, the great Lawgiver of Israel, the other, the great Reformer and Prophet. To see their Master conversing with these most venerable men of Jewish history would exalt him, in the eyes of his companions, to a height he had not before occupied in their minds. This scene was peculiarly fitted, as undoubtedly it was intended, to show the harmonious connexion between the old and new dispensations, since their great Leaders were seen holding a friendly interview. It afforded new evidence of Jesus' Messiahship; served therefore to encourage the disciples, whose hearts had failed them at the prospect of their Master's death, and their own exposure to persecution, which he had predicted. From a lowly individual, he now rose before their conceptions into the highest glory conceivable by a Jewish mind. But more than this. The transfiguration may have taken place for the sake of Jesus as well as his disciples. This is indicated by the subject of the conversation, as given by Luke, who says, they "spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." They appeared to encourage and strengthen him by their sympathy, for a fate which was so dreadful to contemplate, that in the garden he prayed, that if it were possible the cup might pass from him. If an angel *then* appeared to succour him, why is it not likely that this scene, with its glory, and heavenly visitants, and voice from the cloud, was designed to sustain the Master, as well as impress his followers? We are not informed in what way the disciples identified Moses and Elijah, but not unlikely they ascertained the fact from Jesus himself.

Digitized by Google

4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus: Lord, it is good
for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three taber-
nacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.
5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed
them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said: This
is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.
6 And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and
7 were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and
8 said: Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up
9 their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they

4. *Answered Peter.* Rather, proceeded to say, for it does not appear that his remark was any reply to what had been said before. We are elsewhere told that the disciples were heavy with sleep, but awoke and beheld the glorious appearance, and that, as the two men were departing, Peter, with his characteristic forwardness, although participating in the fear common to all three, and hardly knowing what he uttered, said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here," &c. — *Three tabernacles.* Or, booths, such as could be formed of the boughs of trees common in that place. This speech, whilst it revealed the wild rapture of Peter, disclosed also his earthly savor of mind. He seems to have supposed that this scene could, from its nature, be long perpetuated; or that these distinguished individuals would remain as assistants to Christ in founding a temporal kingdom; or, as has been suggested, he wished to dwell apart from the cares of life, in this sweet solitude and celestial society, nor again return to encounter those terrible evils that had lately formed the unwelcome subject of his Master's conversation.

5. *A bright cloud.* A luminous one, which was a symbol of the Divine presence, or the Shechinah. Ex. xvi. 10, 2 Chron. v. 14. — *Overshadowed.* Better, *surrounded* them, as a cloud of *light* could not from its nature *overshadow* any thing. — *A voice out of the cloud, &c.* The same audible Divine sanction of Jesus had been before given at his baptism, and was afterwards at Jerusalem, in the presence of the multitude. Matt. iii. 17, and John xii. 28. Some suppose that reference is particularly made to Deut. xviii. 15. Peter long after, 2 Pet. i. 16 – 18, referred to this scene and to the Voice, as a proof of his Master's authority and truth. Some suppose that John, i. 14, also refers to it, but not upon any strong grounds. — Though no articulate voice now speaks from the sky to bid us hear him, who is the beloved Son of God, yet his bloody cross, his empty sepulchre, and his benign Gospel, with all its sweet and thrilling tones, are ever sounding the solemn command in our ears, and in the depths of our spiritual nature. See note on Matt. iii. 17.

6. *Sore.* An old English word for very, exceedingly. Full of consternation, they fall prostrate upon the earth. Acts ix. 4. From a notion prevalent among the Jews, that one who saw God should die, they were perhaps afraid to look up. Ex. iii. 6; Dan. viii. 17. In Luke, they are said to have "feared, as they entered into the cloud."

Digitized by Google

came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead. —— And his disciples asked him, saying: Why 10 then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus 11

9. *Came down from the mountain.* Luke states, ix. 37, that they did not come down till the next day, from which it has been inferred that the transfiguration took place in the night, which they had passed on the mountain, and that this might have partially influenced Peter in proposing to build three tents. — *Tell the vision to no man, &c.* Or, as Mark has it, "that they should tell no man *what things they had seen.*" The vision then was not what we understand by that word now, as some have contended, but a sight, an appearance. The purpose of the transfiguration, as already intimated, was to strengthen Jesus for his approaching sufferings by the sympathy of the great worthies of the old dispensation, and the approving voice of Heaven; and to confirm the belief of the disciples in Jesus as the Christ, and remove the discouragements lately produced by the prediction of his death, through an exhibition of his glorified state. The reasons, therefore, of Jesus' enjoining this secrecy were similar to those, which prompted him to make the same prohibition on other occasions. Matt. xvi. 20. The disciples did not yet sufficiently understand the nature of his kingdom to proclaim his Messiahship. Their minds rather needed to be held in restraint. The people also were in too inflammable a state for this fact, which, had it been made known, would have proved like a spark in a magazine of powder. With that wisdom which never failed him, he therefore commanded them to keep secret what they had witnessed. — The Jews had often required a sign from heaven as a proof that Jesus was the Christ. Here was a sign from heaven, to satisfy the most skeptical. — The transfiguration affects the question of Christ's person, for he appears here, not in his state of humiliation, but of glory. And what is his glory? It is that of a Divine messenger; a beloved Son of God, not God himself, in which character it would seem that this was the time and place for him to appear, if he was in reality the Supreme. — *Risen again from the dead.* Mark says that they were in doubt about his meaning. They did not yet understand how, if he were the Messiah, he could suffer death, nor, accordingly, how he could be literally raised from the dead.

10 – 13. Parallel to Mark ix. 10 – 13.

10. *Elias must first come*, i. e. Elijah. This was the popular opinion entertained by the Jews, founded on Mal. iv. 5, 6. The error consisted in supposing that the identical Elijah of old times would reappear amongst men, and not that *an* Elijah, i. e. a man of like character and office, a hardy reformer, was to come before the advent of the Messiah. It would appear that this conversation took place whilst Jesus and the three were coming down from the mountain, before they reached the other disciples and the multitude. They asked the question, because they had been prohibited from proclaiming the Messiah, though Elijah his precursor had already come, as they thought, being seen by them on the mountain, and no reason therefore seemingly existing why they should not immediately publish their Master's Messi-

Digitized by Google

answered and said unto them: Elias truly shall first come, and
12 restore all things; but I say unto you, that Elias is come
already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him what-
soever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer
13 of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto
them of John the Baptist.
14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to
15 him a *certain* man, kneeling down to him, and saying: Lord,
have mercy on my son; for he is lunatic and sore vexed; for
16 oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I

---

ahship. Or, to construe their question differently, *Why do the Scribes say that Elias must first come*, when the Messiah has already appeared, and no forerunner has preceded him? If thou art the Messiah, where is Elijah that was to herald thy advent? Are the Scribes right or wrong in their instructions on this point?

11. Jesus replies, that the Scribes are right; they say truly that Elijah is to come first and restore all things, or establish, or consummate the whole,— or prepare for the Messiah by a great moral reformation, Matt. iii. 1–7; Luke iii. 3–15, i. e. such is the purpose of God; not but what Elijah had *already* come. In Mark the present tense is used.

12. *That Elias is come already*, i. e. John the Baptist, who might be properly called an Elijah, from his austere life, and his energetic spirit of reform. Luke i. 17.— *Knew him not*. Recognised him not in his official character, as the messenger of God, and the forerunner of the Messiah.— *Whatsoever they listed*. Have treated him with every indignity. *Listed* is old English for *chose*.— *Also the Son of Man*. The Messiah will meet with no better fate than his forerunner.

13. It appears that the Apostles did not know, before this, that John was the predicted Elijah of Malachi.

14–18. Parallel to Mark ix. 14–27; Luke ix. 37–43.

14. *When they were come to the multitude*. Mark states that "all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and, running to him, saluted him." Some have conjectured that a certain glorious lustre still lingered around his person, as there did around Moses when he came down from the mount. Ex. xxxiv. 29, 30. But the probability is that he came to them by surprise, and they rejoiced to see him.— *Man, kneeling down to him*. "The ancients consecrate the ear to Memory, the forehead to Genius, the right hand to Faith, and the knees to Mercy." The man threw himself into a posture of earnest supplication. He was pleading for an only son. Luke ix. 38.

15. *Lunatic*, i. e. moonstruck, or affected with a disorder which was thought to be influenced by the changes of the moon, though it was also believed that an evil spirit was implicated in the convulsions. For as Lightfoot remarks: "It was very usual for the Jews to attribute some of the more grievous diseases to evil spirits, specially those wherein either the body was distorted, or the mind disturbed and tossed with a frenzy." See note on Matt. iv. 24. So far as the disease can now be known by the symptoms that are

Digitized by Google

brought him unto thy disciples, and they could not cure him.
Then Jesus answered and said: O faithless and perverse gen- 17
eration! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer
you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil, 18
and he departed out of him; and the child was cured from
that very hour. —— Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, 19
and said: Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said 20
unto them: Because of your unbelief. For verily I say unto
you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say

---

recorded, it would seem to have been epilepsy, or a falling sickness, attended with violent paroxysms, the victim foaming at the mouth, gnashing with his teeth, wallowing upon the ground, torn and bruised, falling into the fire, or the water, making violent outcries. He had a dumb spirit, or lost his speech at times, and enjoyed only short intervals of reason. Luke ix. 39. This desperate case was presented to our Saviour to cure.

16. *Could not cure him.* The reason why they could not is assigned in verse 20.

17. *O faithless and perverse generation! Perverse* in the original is derived from a word which signifies to twist, to turn awry; as *wrong* in English, by a like metaphor, comes from *wrung*, a participle from *wringen*, to twist. This rebuke was addressed to those present, in general; as well to his distrusting followers as to the cavilling Scribes, Mark ix. 14, who, not unlikely, triumphed in the failure of the disciples to work a cure. — *How long shall I be with you, &c.* How long will my presence and assistance be required among you? How long shall I endure with patience your perversity? The tone of Jesus' mind was rather that of regret and sorrow than of impatience.

18. *Rebuked the devil.* Demon. Jesus used the popular language of his day, and addressed the youth as if some evil spirit were in him; but his words no more imply that he regarded the demon as a conscious being, than his addressing the dead, or the winds and waves, or a fever, as was the fact, would indicate that he believed them to be conscious agents. — *From that very hour.* From that moment. The suddenness with which this desperate disorder was cured proved that it was done by no common means; for it usually required a continued medical treatment.

19. *To Jesus apart.* According to Mark ix. 28, *in the house.* The disciples, like most transgressors, little suspected that their difficulty and failure arose from any personal deficiency. The question they ask carries the idea that they had made an attempt to cure the child, but had not succeeded.

20. *Because of your unbelief.* Or rather, want of confidence and trust. Perhaps the violence of the disease, perhaps the skeptical questionings of the Scribes, had shaken their assurance. — *Faith as a grain of mustard seed.* Understood by some as meaning a living, growing faith, such as might be illustrated by the vegetable kingdom. Matt. xiii. 31, 32. But others take the sense to be, If you have the smallest genuine faith, you can do all things; for the orientals frequently use the mustard seed as an emblem of what is extremely small. Mark xi. 23;

Digitized by Google

unto this mountain: Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.
21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.
22 And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them: The
23 Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

Luke xvii. 6. — *Ye shall say unto this mountain, &c.* A hyperbolical and proverbial phrase, denoting the greatest power. 1 Cor. xiii. 2. The least true faith would enable them to perform the mightiest wonders. The Jews were accustomed to call those teachers eminent for their virtues and genius, *rooters up, removers of mountains*, as descriptive of their power.

21. *This kind goeth not out, &c.* Some suppose the signification to be, that this kind of demons, or of beings, cannot be dispossessed without unusual spiritual exercises; but no mention had been made, in this conversation, of demons, or that this kind of miracles cannot be performed without extraordinary preparation. Other commentators suppose an allusion to be made to faith, of which they had just been speaking. For where that faith was possessed even in the smallest degree, as a grain of mustard seed, all miracles were alike easy, even to the rooting up of trees and mountains, and hurling them into the sea, and all demons and diseases could be equally well expelled. This kind of faith emanated not but by fasting and prayer, by the most diligent use of the means of devotion, and spiritual life. — This verse is left out by Wakefield, and Adam Clarke "strongly suspects it to be an interpolation," as it is wanting in some of the earliest manuscripts and versions.

22 – 23. Parallel to Mark ix. 30 – 32, and Luke ix. 43 – 45.

22. *Abode in Galilee.* Whilst they were travelling or moving about in Galilee. — *Shall be betrayed.* Better, delivered up, without reference to the mode in which it would be done. It is so rendered in Mark and Luke. We learn from Mark that Jesus was at this time living as far as possible in retirement. His mind seems to have been much occupied with the thoughts of his impending death. This was the second time that he had mentioned this distressing subject. It is observable, that this prediction was made while Jesus was yet in Galilee in security, before he went up to Jerusalem and was subject to the dangers that there surrounded him. What a fortitude must his have been, that he could with such calmness anticipate and speak of the sufferings, which he so clearly foresaw! The common opinions entertained of Jesus do him injustice. They invest him chiefly with the character of meekness and inoffensiveness, qualities indeed, which he possessed in an eminent degree, but which were balanced by the purest heroism ever seen among men.

23. *They were exceeding sorry.* We learn from the other Evangelists that the disciples did not understand his prediction, and were afraid to ask for an explanation. Their grief, therefore, was aggravated by the indefiniteness of the approaching danger. The dark and unwelcome subject conjured up appalling images of fear and terror.

Digitized by Google

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received 24
tribute *money* came to Peter, and said: Doth not your master
pay tribute? He saith: yes. And when he was come into 25
the house, Jesus prevented him, saying: What thinkest thou,
Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or
tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith
unto him: Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him: Then are the 26
children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, 27
go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that
first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou
shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them
for me and thee.

---

24. *Capernaum.* The place where he abode. — *They that received tribute money.* Supposed to be not those who collected the taxes paid to the Romans, but persons who collected the contributions for the service of the temple, in the payment of its necessary expenses for sacrifices and other things. Ex. xxx. 13; Neh. x. 32. It was an annual tribute of half a shekel, levied on all Jews twenty years old and upwards. The Greek word translated *tribute* expresses the sum, two drachms, amounting to about twenty-eight cents of our money. This tax is supposed to have been in some degree a voluntary one, which would account for the question put to Peter respecting his Master's paying it.

25. The impetuous disciple answered in the affirmative before consulting Jesus. — *Prevented.* Formerly meaning, according to its derivation, *to go before*, or *to anticipate*. Jesus anticipated Peter. — *What thinkest thou.* It would seem that Jesus would delicately remind Peter that he had given an answer without his authority. — *Strangers*, i. e. those not related to the king, or members of his family.

26. *Then are the children free.* He had, by his question, led Peter to acknowledge the fact on which his conclusion was grounded. His argument was, that, as earthly kings exempted their sons from paying tribute, so he, being the Son of God, was, on the same ground, released from the obligation of paying tribute for the temple of God. The temple was God's palace. Jesus, as his son, was accordingly free from paying a tax for its service.

27. *Lest we should offend them.* Jesus ever manifested a spirit of prudence. He would avoid giving any unnecessary offence, setting thus an example of caution, and teaching us, that it is better to waive our privileges and yield our rights, than to insist upon them to the prejudice of the cause of truth. Something is to be conceded to the captiousness of men. We should strive to be blameless and irreproachable, as was the Author and Finisher of our faith. If Jesus had not paid the tribute, it would have furnished his cavilling enemies with an occasion to say, that he despised the temple and worship of God, and thus have caused them still more obstinately to reject him as the Messiah. — *A piece of money.* In the original a *stater*, a Roman silver coin, of the value of one shekel in the Jewish

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XVIII.

Instructions of Jesus.

AT the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying: 2 Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

currency, four drachms in the Grecian, and about fifty-six cents in our own, and therefore sufficent to pay the tribute of two persons. — Here was a miracle, either of knowledge, or of power, or both. Jesus knew that a certain fish with the money would first come to Peter's hook, or caused that it should first come. It has been objected, that the miracle was wrought for a trifling object, and for Jesus' benefit. But it may be remarked, that Peter shared the advantage with his Master, and that Jesus was not individually benefited, except in a very small degree, and that, in a case in which he might have pleaded exemption. The miracle, also, was calculated for other ends. It would impress Peter, the other disciples, and the tax-gatherers, with a new proof of the divinity of Jesus, whose power thus extended into the depths of the sea, and over the animal kingdom. It would also serve to enforce upon them and upon all men, the obligation of obeying the laws of the government under which they live, of "submitting to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," and of contributing to the support of the public institutions of religion.

CHAP. XVIII.

1–5. Parallel to Mark ix. 33–37, and Luke ix. 46–48.

1. *At the same time.* This connects it, in general, with the preceding events. — *Came the disciples unto Jesus.* Here is a slight discrepancy, which is capable of being explained, and which is of value as showing the individual authority and truthfulness of the writers. Matthew states that the disciples first asked Jesus; Mark, that he first inquired of them the subject of their dispute by the way, and that they were silent through shame. Different periods in the conversation are referred to, one taking it up at one point, and the other at another. — *Who is the greatest.* It has been conjectured, that what led to this rivalry was the approbation shown to Peter, Matt. xvi. 17, 18, and the privilege granted to him, with James and John, of being present at the raising of the ruler's daughter, Luke viii. 51, and at the scene of the transfiguration, Matt. xvii. 1. Although Jesus, by announcing his death, had filled his disciples with foreboding apprehensions, he had, also, by predictions of his glory, excited their ambition. For they, probably, supposed he would establish his kingdom after he was raised from the dead. Acts i. 6. They disputed which should hold the highest place in his kingdom, should occupy the first station in his temporal government. Their hearts were puffed up with ambition.

2. *Called a little child, &c.* To make a deeper impression, he gives them a lesson of humility, in the most touching manner, by a symbolical action, a common mode of instruction in the east, of which there are instances in John xiii. 4, xx. 22; Acts xxi. 11; Rev. xviii. 21. Tradition relates, that this

Digitized by Google

and said: Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and 3
become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom
of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this 4
little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name re- 5
ceiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones 6
which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone
were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the
depth of the sea. —— Woe unto the world because of offences! 7

---

child was Ignatius, afterwards a celebrated Father and Martyr of the church, but it is very uncertain.

3. *Be converted, &c.* i. e. changed from the state of ambition to humility. Pointing to the child, he said: There is your model; if you do not "fling away ambition," and become like him, so far from having lofty stations in my kingdom, you cannot even become members of it at all. The unambitious, unenvying, and docile temper of childhood stood in direct contrast with the worldly and aspiring spirit of the disciples. Matt. xix. 14, xx. 26; 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

4. *The same is greatest.* He, whose disposition approaches the nearest to a simple, childlike spirit, shall be the most eminent of my disciples, and shall share first in the advancement and glory of my kingdom.

5. *Shall receive one such little child.* Or, receive with honor and affection one whose character is like that of this little child, in its innocence and humility. The Syriac version reads, "one that is as this child." — *In my name.* For my sake, or as my disciple. Matt. xxv. 40. He before praised the humble; he now commends those who respect and love them, as showing marks of esteem to himself.

6 – 9. Parallel to Mark ix. 41 – 48.

6. *Whoso shall offend*, i. e. cause to offend, or ensnare. — *One of these little ones.* This obscures the sense; which is, one of the lowly, humble followers of Jesus, as is shown by the next words. — *Which believe in me.* Or, as expressed in Mark, that "belong to Christ." There is no reference to age. — *Millstone.* The original is supposed to mean, not one of the smaller stones turned by hand, usually by females, but a large one propelled by asses or mules, the upper millstone. The punishment of drowning here described was common amongst the Syrians, and other nations of the east, though it is said not to have existed among the Jews. Persons were sometimes rolled up in sheets of lead, or tied to stones, thrown into the water, and drowned. The passage signifies, It were better for him to die, or suffer the worst punishment, than to cause an humble believer, a babe in Christ, to apostatize and fall. — Yet how many are made to fall from virtue and hope by the scandalous lives, the hypocritical professions, the corrupt doctrines, and the superstitious practices of the so called Christian world! Let Jew, and Mahometan, and Pagan, and Infidel declare; who have been repelled from the Great Master on account of the absurdities, and inconsistencies, and abominations of his disciples, and who will rise up as condemning witnesses against them at the bar of heaven.

7. *Woe.* Rather, alas. An ex-

Digitized by Google

For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man
8 by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than, having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire.
9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire. ——
10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold
11 the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of
12 Man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye?

---

pression of concern and sorrow, rather than of denunciation. — *Offences*. Rendered *temptations* in the Ethiopic version, i. e. causes of sin. — *It must needs be*. Such is the constitution and condition of man, that it is to be expected that there will be sin. Taking men as they are, we are to look for offences and snares. Free agency will be abused; but that does not excuse the individual transgressor, for he is responsible for the sin he commits, the evil he causes to others as well as to himself.

8, 9. See note on Matt. v. 29, 30. Causes of offence come from ourselves, as well as from others. But it is better to renounce the most cherished indulgences and sins, though it be like dismembering the hand or the eye, rather than persist in them at the risk of the most terrible consequences, imaged here by everlasting fire. We must deny ourselves the inferior gratifications of a sensual nature, if we would possess the purest pleasures of the spiritual life, and escape the flames of an accusing conscience. — *To enter into life halt or maimed*. These figures are not to be pressed too far, but regarded as adornings of the comparison.

10. *One of these little ones* i. e. one of my humble, childlike disciples. Jesus reverts to the topic in verse 6. — *Their angels do always behold the face of my Father*. Heb. i. 14. Their angels are high in the Divine favor. It was customary in eastern countries for kings to live secluded from common notice. To behold their face therefore, or to enjoy their presence and society, was a mark of the highest favor. In representing his lowly followers as under the care of guardian angels, as a reason why they should be held in honor, he refers to a prevalent opinion among the Jews and other nations, and by this lively figure depicts the tender, minute care of God over his creatures. Jesus always used popular language and imagery as the most forcible instrument of conveying his truth.

11. Another reason is assigned, why the humble-minded should not be despised. The Son of Man came to save them and all who would obey him. The greatest Being came to save the lowest. — *That which was lost*. Those, who, like sheep, had wandered and strayed from the true fold. Jesus came not "to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance," to cure the sick, not the well, to restore the endangered and the lost, not the strong and safe.

Digitized by Google

if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And 13 if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep* than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven 14 that one of these little ones should perish. —— Moreover, if 15 thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear *thee, then* take with 16 thee one or two more; that in the mouth of two or three wit-

---

Therefore be of good cheer, ye who are heavy-laden with sin and sorrow, bewildered and wandering. For it was for persons of just your condition, that Jesus lived and died.

12. *How think ye?* As if he would appeal to their personal experience and feelings. He would illustrate the compassion of God for the lost, and his joy at their recovery, by the feelings of the shepherd for his flock. The general subject of the preceding verses is here continued. — *Ninety and nine.* The use of round numbers of this kind was common then as now. — *Into the mountains.* These words are connected in the best authorities with *ninety and nine*, thus: Doth he not leave the ninety and nine in the mountains, and go, &c. Luke, xv. 4, has it, "in the wilderness," or uninhabited region.

13. *He rejoiceth more of that sheep.* In his remarks upon human nature and its manifestations, our Lord ever shows that he knew what was in man. "The nature of joy is to enlarge itself less upon ordinary occasions, than upon extraordinary and accidental ones." A small, unexpected favor produces more joy, because more surprise, than a large blessing long possessed.

14. *It is not the will of your Father, &c.* This is the doctrine of which the foregoing parable is an illustration. As if he had said: A faithful shepherd is not more concerned for the smallest of his flock, than is your Father that not the least of his rational offspring should be lost.

15. Thus far Jesus had admonished the offending. He now gives advice to the offended, and shows how they were to treat those who injured them. — *Thy brother*, i. e. thy Christian brother, or thy brother man. — *Go and tell him.* Lev. xix. 17; Luke xvii. 3. Wait not till he comes to you, but be willing to go to him, and expostulate and argue with him kindly, and, if possible, convince him of his fault. Obtain redress in private, if it is in your power, rather than blazon the matter abroad. Many difficulties arise, simply from a misunderstanding, which a private interview would correct. Angry passions would be less likely to be excited where there were no witnesses to a man's fault and disgrace. The best opportunity would thus be afforded for reparation, if wrong had been done. — *Thou hast gained thy brother.* Hast recovered him to the Christian brotherhood, or regained his confidence and friendship, and brought him back to penitence and virtue. 1 Cor. ix. 19.

Digitized by Google

17 nesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a
18 publican. ——Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall
19 loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father
20 which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

16 But if this step fails, resort to a second. — *Take with thee one or two more, &c.* If inclined to deny his fault and resist your remonstrance, the presence and advice of other persons of confidence and weight would control his passions; testimony might thus also be borne to the injury, and to the unsuccessful attempt at reconciliation on the side of the injured party. Allusion is made to the Mosaic law. Deut. xix. 15. — *In the mouth.* A Hebrew idiom for *by the testimony.*

17. *Tell it unto the church.* Tyndale's rendering is better, *congregation*, for such is its meaning in the original. The particular religious community or body to which you both belong. This was in conformity to the usages of the Jews, who admonished offenders in their synagogues. — *As an heathen man and a publican.* Matt. v. 47. Language derived from the conduct of the Jews towards the Gentiles and tax-gatherers. He is to be cut off from your communion and friendship as a Christian brother, and is to be regarded by you as one of the world at large. Still the common offices of humanity are not to be denied him. Only rebuke, not revenge or malice, is permitted. Rom. xvi. 17; 2 Thess. iii. 14.

18. *Bind — loose*, i. e. forbid and permit. See note on Matt. xvi. 19. Here is a repetition of the promise made to Peter, and now extended to all the Apostles, probably with more particular application to the case of discipline mentioned in the last verse. John xx. 23. This verse utterly annihilates the Roman Catholic pretensions to authority and infallibility, so far as grounded on our Savour's commendation of Peter, in Matt. xvi. 18, 19. Some think an answer is here given to the question proposed in the first verse: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus says: I confer no peculiar authority on Peter, but grant you all an equal power in the administration of my religion.

19. *If two of you shall agree on earth, &c.* A strong motive for union is here presented, that what they in common asked in the Christian cause, in which they were engaged, would be granted. — *Any thing.* Should be *every thing*, i. e. whatever related to the promulgation of the Gospel. General expressions are to be limited by the connexion in which they stand. This promise, like the foregoing in verse 18, and the subsequent one in verse 20, is, from the nature of the case, restricted to the Apostles. Acts i. 14–26; xv. 1–29.

20. *Gathered together in my name*, i. e. as my disciples, or with my authority, for the sake of my religion. — *There am I in the midst of them.* This figurative language is

Digitized by Google

Then came Peter to him, and said: Lord, how oft shall my 21
brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?
Jesus saith unto him: I say not unto thee, until seven times, 22
but until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of 23
heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account
of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was 24
brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents. But 25

illustrated by the Rabbinical writers, who say: "If two men sit down with the law between them, the Shechinah or Divine Presence is with them." Wherever you are gathered together as my Apostles, though it be but two or three, i. e. a small number, yet it shall be as though I were personally present and praying with you, and blessed your devotions and meeting. My truth, my authority, my spirit shall be with you. 1 Cor. v. 3, 4. The wholly unwarranted conclusion has been drawn from this text, that Jesus was the omnipresent God, else his promise would have no significance. But even if he were personally present in every Christian assembly in the world, it would be far from proving his infinite presence in all worlds and all space. But if he were God, and known to be God by his disciples, it would have been superfluous for him to have said that he should be present with them under certain circumstances; for they would have known that he would necessarily be ever and everywhere present. — It may be remarked here, that Jesus is an Intercessor with the Father for his disciples on earth. 1 John ii. 1.

21. *How oft shall my brother sin, &c.* Peter may have been prompted to this inquiry, by the remarks upon treating one who had injured us, in verses 15–17, or perhaps by some indignity which he himself may have suffered in the dispute between the Apostles, verse 1. The expression, *brother*, is to be understood as meaning one of a common faith, or one of the common human brotherhood. — *Till seven times?* Seven was called the full or complete number. Peter might have been led to specify the particular number, because that was a matter in discussion among the Jews, who, according to Lightfoot, pardoned the third, but not the fourth offence. So that Peter had doubled the number, as if to go to the greatest length of mercy.

22. But Jesus would inculcate a far nobler spirit than that of the Jewish schools. — *I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven.* Forgive as long and as often as there is need or opportunity of doing it, and the offender sincerely repents. There is no limit to the exercise of a merciful disposition; for so the number *seventy times seven* indicates. Luke xvii. 4.

23. To produce a deeper impression of the duty of forgiveness, he relates a striking parable, or moral fiction. — *Therefore.* For. — *The kingdom of heaven.* The administration of heaven. God deals with men as a certain king dealt with his servants. — *Likened.* Like. — *Would take account.* Would settle accounts, or reckon with. — *His servants.* Not slaves, but officers, or ministers, who managed the royal estates or revenues.

24. *Ten thousand talents.* The sum here stated, if the silver talent was meant, would be about fifteen millions of dollars, but if the gold

Digitized by Google

forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and pay-
26 ment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying: Lord, have patience with me, and I will
27 pay thee all. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with
28 compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying: Pay me that thou owest.
29 And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him,
30 saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should
31 pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry; and came and told unto their lord all
32 that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him: O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that
33 debt, because thou desiredst me; shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on
34 thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tor-

---

talent, about fifteen times as much. The sense is, an immense sum, and hence a large round number is used to express it.

25. *Commanded him to be sold, &c.* This was in accordance with the Jewish practices, if not law. The servitude thus produced could, however, last but six years. Lev. xxv. 39–46; 2 Kings iv. 1; Amos viii. 6. The same custom also prevailed among the Greeks and Romans, and debtors were often subject to great cruelties by whippings and imprisonments from their creditors. — *And payment to be made.* So far as practicable out of the proceeds of the sale.

26. *Worshipped him.* Did him obesiance. — *Have patience with me.* Tyndale translates, "Give me respite."

27. *Forgave him the debt*, i. e. granted his request, and remitted the debt for the present.

28. *An hundred pence.* The Roman denarius or penny was worth about fourteen cents. The sum then was fourteen dollars, an insignificant amount when contrasted with his own vast debt. — *Took him by the throat.* Or, throttled him. His own violence appears the more odious, as it is set by the side of the lenient treatment he had received from his infinitely larger creditor.

30. *Cast him into prison.* This custom prevailed among the Romans, and, barbarous and absurd as it is, has existed in most Christian lands to this day. But the stain upon civilization and religion is beginning to be wiped out.

31. *They were very sorry.* More than that; they were very indignant; they were grieved and provoked.

34. *Tormentors.* Rather, jailors, or prison-keepers, who used torture only when occasion required. Im-

Digitized by Google

mentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So like- 35
wise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

CHAPTER XIX.

Conversations of Jesus.

AND it came to pass, *that*, when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of

---

prisonment, in the east, is a great punishment; since offenders, particularly state criminals, are scantily fed, treated with great severity, loaded with clogs and chains, and subjected to scourgings and rackings, which speedily end their lives. The Great Teacher would thus graphically paint the miserable consequences of a hard and unforgiving temper.

35. *From your hearts.* Sincerely and honestly. — *Their.* His. This verse expresses the moral or application of the parable; "He shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy." Revenge is the part of a beast, but forgiveness is the part of a man, the part of God. God will treat his children as they treat one another; such is his law. An unforgiving disposition draws upon itself a dreadful punishment, not by any arbitrary enactment, but by the natural arrangement of things. It fills the heart with bitterness and ashes. — We learn from this parable, 1st, That forgiveness of our sins by God, great though they be, depends upon the condition that we forgive others, though their offences are comparatively small; according to the petition of the Lord's prayer. Penitence is another condition, though not stated here, as the object of this parable did not require it. 2d, That God forgives freely. There was no interposition on the part of any person to stand surety, or make payment for the debtor; but, upon his earnest entreaty, "the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt." Yet we are told that the administration of heaven is likened unto this king; verse 23. God deals with us as the king dealt with his servant. How totally inconsistent this is with the popular doctrine of the Atonement, which represents God as pardoning no transgression, until a full satisfaction is made by the death of Christ! Can this with any propriety be called forgiveness! Is it not, rather, stern justice, unrelenting severity! Where is there any pardon, if the debt must all be paid, — if not by the offender, at least, by some one else! Again, as we are told to imitate the Divine conduct in this particular, we must, according to the above doctrine, exact the full debt from our fellow-men; never forgive a transgression against ourselves, until our justice, or revenge, be appeased; in fact, imitate the inexorable creditor. Who does not shudder at such conclusions, which are the direct inferences from this prevalent corruption of Christianity!

CHAP. XIX.

1–9. Parallel to Mark x. 1–12.

1. *He departed from Galilee.* He did not visit Galilee again, till after his resurrection. We are told by Luke, that he now "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," as if

Digitized by Google

2 Judea, beyond Jordan. And great multitudes followed him;
and he healed them there.
3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and say-
ing unto him: Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for
4 every cause? And he answered and said unto them: Have
ye not read, that he, which made *them* at the beginning, made
5 them male and female; and said: "For this cause shall a
man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and
6 they twain shall be one flesh"? Wherefore they are no more

---

lie summoned up courage for his approaching fate. — *Coasts of Judea, beyond Jordan.* An obscurity rests upon this sentence, which has long perplexed the learned. For Judea proper did not extend east of the Jordan, or include the Peræa, or that region beyond the Jordan. It has been suggested, that "beyond Jordan," or *the* Jordan, properly speaking, should be rendered *upon* or *by the side of* the Jordan. John i. 28. But the more probable explanation is, that he came into Judea, from Galilee, not by the direct and customary route through Samaria, which he had been prevented from taking by the inhospitality of the inhabitants, Luke ix. 52, 53, but by the more circuitous route through the Peræa so called, — according to Mark, "the farther side of Jordan," and, as Matthew has it, "beyond Jordan."

3. *To put away his wife for every cause.* For any cause or fault whatever. It is probable, that this, like other questions proposed by the Pharisees, was asked, not for the sake of information, but to involve Jesus in difficulty. Two celebrated schools existed at this time among the Jews, called by the names of two great teachers, Hillel and Shammai, which held different views upon the dissolution of the marriage relation; that of Shammai contending that divorce was unlawful, except in the single case of infidelity in the connexion, whilst that of Hillel, more lax, permitted the union to be severed on any trivial ground, as that of dislike or discontent. Deut. xxiv. 1. The answer of Jesus they supposed could not be framed without exposing him to the odium of one or the other of these parties. From verse 10, we infer that these questioners belonged to the school of Hillel.

4. But the usual wisdom of Jesus did not desert him. He refers them, beyond the quibbling and jargon of the schools, to the authority of the Great Lawgiver, and the purpose of God, who made the sexes, and instituted marriage as a connexion not to be dissolved for any slight cause. Gen. i. 27, ii. 21, 22. "God created at first no more than a single pair, one of each sex, whom he united in the bond of marriage, and in so doing exhibited a standard of that union to all generations." — *Male and female.* Rather, a male and a female.

5. *And said.* The nominative to this verb is doubtful. It may be God, or Moses, or the Scripture, or the verb may be impersonal. — *For this cause.* On account of the divine purpose, in making them of different sexes. — *Twain.* Two. The binding tenure of the relation is illustrated by the two facts, that the most intimate and early connexions, as the filial and fraternal ones, are given up for this new one; and that

Digitized by Google

twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. ——They say unto him: Why 7
did Moses, then, command to give a writing of divorcement
and to put her away? He saith unto them: Moses, because 8
of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your
wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto 9
you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso
marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. ——His 10
disciples say unto him: If the case of the man be so with *his*

two persons thus joined become as one flesh, one person, one soul, having like privileges and rights. The inference is, then, that no trivial cause should sunder such a riveted union.

6. *Hath joined together.* The verb in the original signifies *yoked together*, by a metaphor taken from the yoking of oxen. Indeed, in some countries, a yoke or chains are put upon the newly married couple, as emblems of their close connexion. Jesus declares that the marriage bond is sanctioned by God, and not to be lightly sundered by human caprice or folly.

7. They objected to this reasoning, that Moses, in his law, permitted divorces. Deut. xxiv. 1–4. — *Command to give a writing, &c.* The command of Moses related not to the putting away, which he permitted for the reason stated in the next verse, but to the giving of a bill of divorce.

8. *Because of the hardness of your hearts.* On account of your intractable disposition, referring to the Jewish people in general. We here have an explicit admission, that some laws and customs among the chosen people were in themselves imperfect, but were necessary, in that peculiar and semi-barbarous period. Had the Jews not been permitted to put away their wives in many cases, they might have treated them with great cruelty, and even put them to death. Thus civil laws, in all periods, present no perfect standard of right, but are necessarily mixed with imperfections, in their accommodation to the age and the people. The civil regulations of the great Hebrew legislator, in this respect, shared the common fate of all political institutions. They were, for the time, best suited to the wants of the Jewish nation, but destined to be outgrown and superseded, by a jurisprudence more nearly in accordance with immutable right. In saying that "from the beginning it was not so," Jesus asserts that the original purpose, in the Divine establishment of the relation, was, that it should be perpetual. The influence of his religion has given, wherever it has gone, new sanctity to marriage, and thus elevated woman and home.

9. *I say unto you.* There is in these words a lofty tone of unborrowed and original authority, as if he were speaking from heaven, and not of himself. See note on Matt. v. 32; Luke xvi. 18. According to Mark, these words were uttered in private, to the disciples, after they had retired from the crowd. A divorce is permitted by Christ in the single case of conjugal unfaithfulness.

10. *If the case of the man be so with his wife, &c.* If such be the condi-

Digitized by Google

11 wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them: All men
12 cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs which were so born from *their* mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray; and the disciples re-
14 buked them. But Jesus said: Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom

---

tion of the husband with his wife. The disciples talked as Jews, full of the notions of their times. If, said they, marriage has this binding tenure, it is better to remain single. It is a striking proof of the truth of the Gospels, that there is no concealment of the errors, and follies, and sins of the Apostles; but they are depicted just as they were, obtuse and blinded, but honest.

11. *All men cannot receive this saying.* All cannot practise this saying, and abstain from marriage. — *Save they to whom it is given.* Or, who are disinclined, from their natural constitution, or other causes, to marry. 1 Cor. vii. 7.

12. *Were so born.* Those who were indisposed to marriage from their birth. — *Which were made, &c.* The word *eunuchs* is here used in its literal sense; but in the previous and subsequent places figuratively. — *Which have made themselves, &c.* Who have, from choice, from religious motives, for the sake of promoting God's kingdom, by their greater exemption from private cares, abstained from marriage. No personal violence is spoken of here. It is supposed that reference was made, in this clause, to the Essenes, who voluntarily lived in celibacy. — *Able to receive it.* Referring to the words above, in verse 11. Let him who can live without marriage, if such be his preference, live without it. No peculiar holiness is here attached to an unmarried life by Jesus.

13 – 29. Parallel to Mark x. 13 – 30; Luke xviii. 15 – 30.

13. *That he should put his hands on them, and pray.* It was customary among the Jews, to lay the hands on a person's head, in whose behalf a prayer was offered. Gen. xlviii. 14; 2 Kings v. 11. This is one of the most beautiful passages in our Saviour's history. Though occupied with healing the sick, preaching to the multitude, disciplining his followers, and, chief of all, with the fearful anticipation of his hastening fate at Jerusalem, he yet had time and affectionate thoughts to bestow on those little innocents, that were the purest images of his divine kingdom. But the disciples, perhaps impatient under the interruption, or deeming it beneath their Master's dignity to notice and caress children, repulsed them. They may have been stimulated the more to this harshness, from the lesson, which had been before deduced from childhood, against their ambition. Matt. xviii. 2. The sight of children had become distasteful.

14. A similar sentiment is taught

Digitized by Google

of heaven. And he laid *his* hands on them, and departed 15
thence.

And, behold, one came and said unto him: Good Master, 16
what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And 17
he said unto him: Why callest thou me good? *there is* none
good but one, *that is*, God. But if thou wilt enter into life,

---

in Matt. xviii. 5. — *Of such is the kingdom of heaven.* The kingdom of heaven is composed of such as have a childlike simplicity, affection, and purity. Mark writes, that Jesus was "much displeased," that his disciples rebuked them. — Children can no more be carried to receive the Saviour's benediction, as in olden time, but they may be taken to the altar and baptismal font of his religion, to be dedicated, in all their loveliness, to his service.

"Happy were they, the mothers, in whose sight
Ye grew, fair children! hallowed from that hour
By your Lord's blessing! Surely thence a shower
Of heavenly beauty, a transmitted light,
Hung on your brows and eyelids, meekly bright,
Through all the after years, which saw ye move
Lowly, yet still majestic, in the might,
The conscious glory of the Saviour's love!
And honored be all childhood for the sake
Of that high love! Let reverential care
Watch to behold the immortal spirit wake,
And shield its first bloom from unholy air;
Owning, in each young suppliant glance, the sign
Of claims upon a heritage divine."

What opinion our Saviour entertained of human nature is evident from the benediction here pronounced upon it in its infantile, unsophisticated state. Could he believe that those tender beings were originally and totally depraved in their nature, when he thus held them up as the types of his spiritual kingdom! Far from it.

15. *Laid his hands on them.* Mark has more: "Took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." This action reveals the amiable and affectionate disposition of Jesus.

16. *One came.* He was a young man, verse 20, and a ruler, Luke xviii. 18. He approached Jesus with the signs of the greatest respect, kneeling to him, Mark x. 17. His motive was good, and he proposed the greatest of questions, What he should do to have eternal life. Probably he had been confounded by the instructions of the Jewish doctors, by their subtleties, and division of the commands of God, calling some lighter and some weightier. Hence, he asks, "What good thing shall I do?" His address, "Good Master," or Teacher, was the common title of the day, in speaking to religious instructers. We learn that the doctrine of immortality was not unknown to him, as he inquires how he might gain its blessedness.

17. Jesus first discards these empty titles, according to the direction given to his disciples. Matt. xxiii. 8. — *Why callest thou me good. &c.* According to the reading of Griesbach, *Why askest thou me concerning good? One is good.* But in Mark the text remains unaltered. In this passage, Jesus asserts that God alone is good, originally, absolutely, and perfectly, thus disclaiming his own title to such a character as many of his disciples have attributed to him, that of uncreated perfection. The word God is of Saxon or Teutonic derivation, and signifies *the Good*, the essentially, infinitely Good Being. The young man hoped, perhaps, to secure his salvation, by observing some new rite or command which Jesus might enjoin. But the Saviour re-

Digitized by Google

18 keep the commandments. He saith unto him: Which? Jesus
said: "Thou shalt do no murder; Thou shalt not commit
adultery; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false
19 witness; Honor thy father and *thy* mother;" and: "Thou
20 shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The young man saith unto
him: All these things have I kept from my youth up; what
21 lack I yet? Jesus said unto him: If thou wilt be perfect, go
and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt
22 have treasure in heaven; and come *and* follow me. But when
the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful;
23 for he had great possessions. — Then said Jesus unto his

ferred him to God, as the sum of all excellence, and to his commandments, as the way of life eternal.

18, 19. *Which?* This question shows that he wished to fix on some particular one, as of saving efficacy. Have we not here an instance of a desire that has appeared in all ages, of doing some one thing to save the soul, rather than of complying with the whole circle of God's laws? — *Thou shalt do no murder, &c.* Ex. xx. 12–16; Lev. xix. 18. The Saviour here gives specimens of the commandments, rather than enumerates all that were essential. — *Thy neighbor as thyself. As* means comparatively, not absolutely like.

20. *Kept from my youth up.* Rather, from my childhood up; for he was yet a young man. He thought well of himself, but yet felt the want of something more, and, with the spirit of inquiry, rather than of boasting, he asked, *What lack I yet?* From Mark we learn, that Jesus, when he heard this evidence of his exemplary life, "beholding him, loved him," but said, "One thing thou lackest."

21. *If thou wilt be perfect, &c.* If thou wilt attain to the highest spiritual excellence, and be complete in character, greater sacrifices are required. Renounce the gratifications of wealth, distribute your property among the destitute, and thus attain leisure from worldly concerns to serve as my disciple in preaching the Gospel, and thou shalt possess a richer treasure in heaven than any earthly fortune. No more was required of him in selling all that he had, than of the other persons whom Jesus had called to be his attendants and Apostles, except that his estate was larger. Matthew left all, Luke v. 28, and Peter says the same of the whole company, verse 27.

22. *Went away sorrowful.* A graphic stroke of the Evangelist's pencil. The young man had been put to the proof, and found wanting in that spirit of self-sacrifice and renunciation required by Christianity. He might have an amiable and upright character, but the fountains of the great spiritual deep had not been opened in his soul. He did not yet see that the grand, towering, heavenly good of life consisted in supreme love to God and man, however fortunes might come or go. His great possessions were the grave of his spirit. He retires sorrowful, as we may suppose, with hanging head, and sad countenance, and slow and heavy steps, and heavier heart. No high promptings of the better nature can be resisted without sorrow. It is goodness, not

Digitized by Google

disciples: Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, 24 it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his 25 disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying: Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld *them*, and said 26 unto them: With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. —— Then answered Peter, and said unto 27 him: Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them: Verily 28

---

selfishness, that is light-hearted and serenely happy. The so called gay life of folly and sin is the saddest of all lives, for the inner heart is cold and leaden.

23. Jesus converts the occasion into a lesson of warning against the moral dangers of riches. — *A rich man.* Explained in Mark by "*them that trust in riches.*" — *Shall hardly enter.* Shall with *difficulty* enter. The rich are tempted to trust in their riches as the supreme good. They were therefore disinclined, more than the poor, from entering into the service of Christ on earth, and thence into the spiritual life of heaven. We read of only two rich men who became disciples of Jesus, and that, too, secretly; and the declaration of Jesus stands confirmed by the accumulated experience of centuries. Religion has scarcely any mightier foe to contend with than wealth and its natural concomitants. Matt. xiii. 22; 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

24. Jesus here speaks yet more emphatically, and uses a proverb that signifies the greatest difficulty and improbability. — *Easier for a camel, &c.* A similar expression is found twice in the Talmud, with the substitution of the term elephant in the place of camel. An absolute impossibility is not, of course, meant, for some rich men became disciples of our Lord. The moral dangers of riches are, that they will engross time and the affections to the exclusion of nobler things, and lead to fraud, oppression, and covetousness in their acquisition, and in their possession and use engender pride, luxury, and dissipation, or congeal the whole man with a contracted, icy avarice.

25. *Exceedingly amazed.* Because they looked for a temporal kingdom, in which wealth would be an important element.

26. *Jesus beheld them.* A description of the mingled astonishment and earnestness of his manner as he looked on them. — *Who then*, i. e. what rich man. — *With God all things are possible.* Surprised as you are at the strength of my assertion, impossible as it may seem to human apprehension, and as it concerns human power, yet by divine aid, by the motives of the Gospel, even the rich, with all their temptations to worldliness, may be quickened in the spiritual life.

27. *We have forsaken all, &c.* Peter's question refers to verse 21. Jesus had directed the young man to go and sell all, to relieve the poor; and the inquiry naturally arises, What reward shall we have, who have left our houses, families, and callings, to follow you? It was an inquisitive, not a boastful spirit

Digitized by Google

I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes
29 of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and
30 shall inherit everlasting life. —— But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last *shall be* first.

---

in the disciple. Their all was indeed but little, but it was their all to them, as much as if it had been the wealth of Crœsus, or the crown of Alexander.

28. *In the regeneration.* The best critics place the comma before instead of after these words, for they relate not to the past, but to the future; not to their following Christ, but to their reigning with him in glory. Regeneration here refers not to the change in individual character, so much as to the moral reformation of the world at large, its new creation by Christianity. — *Sit in the throne of his glory, &c.* Said Jesus, This shall be your reward: you shall rank next to me in the kingdom of righteousness and truth, which I am to establish on earth, and in the future world you shall inherit everlasting life and happiness. But in expressing this idea, he enrobes it in a Jewish costume, and uses such material figures as were adapted to their ignorance and unspirituality, and as would array the splendid promise in the most brilliant, but really true colors, to their minds. — *Twelve thrones.* As that was the number of the Apostles. — *Judging.* Ruling, or exercising authority over, as the word often signifies in Scripture. — *Twelve tribes of Israel.* After the Gospel dispensation, this appellation was given to the Christian world, as it had been before to the chosen people. James i. 1. This wonderful, but then so improbable prediction, has been gloriously fulfilled. The fame and doctrine of those obscure men have gone forth into all countries. That new religion, which is "the wonder, the beauty, and the glory of the earth," first spoke its divine accents abroad among the nations, through their "tongues of fire," and shone with the irradiations of their meekness and love. What influence of poet or philosopher can compare with the mighty impulses, which they communicated to the hearts and lives of their own and all succeeding generations? What glory of monarch or warrior can be likened to the thrones of heavenly light, in which these men have swayed the world, "who first fished for their living in the Sea of Galilee, and then were called to be Apostles of Christ"? They "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever."

29. Jesus goes on to extend the promise of noble rewards, beyond the circle of the Twelve, to all who should strive and suffer in the Christian cause. — *For my name's sake,* i. e. as my disciple, or in behalf of my religion. — *An hundred fold.* Mark adds, "with persecutions," intimating the conditions of suffering and death, on which they would secure these illustrious blessings. Rom. viii. 17, 18.

30. This verse has, by the ill-judged division into chapters and verses, been separated from the fol-

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XX.

The Parable of the Laborers, Request of James and John, and Cure of the Blind Man.

FOR the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the 2 laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

lowing parable, to which it belongs; though it is found in Mark, where no parable succeeds it, and where we must suppose it connected with the preceding remarks, as we may conjecture it to be in some degree also in Matthew, for the conversation was continuous. It is a proverbial phrase, generally understood to apply to the reception of Christianity by the Gentiles, earlier than by the more favored Jews; but more likely, from its connexion with foregoing remarks, designed to teach the disciples, that the priority of time of their becoming followers of Christ would not entitle them to any higher rewards than later converts would receive, would not elevate them to loftier dignities, as they erroneously supposed, in the new kingdom. Character, not the time of conversion, would give them distinction one above another.

CHAP. XX.

1. The parable of the laborers is connected with the last verse of the preceding chapter, as is indicated by the word *for*. The kingdom of heaven, or the dealings of God under the Christian dispensation, may be likened, said Jesus, to the treatment of his laborers by the owner of a vineyard. We have here a continuation of the conversation in the last chapter, and the parable can only be understood with reference to that. Peter had inquired respecting the rewards of discipleship. The Saviour replies, that the Apostles would attain the highest honors, next to himself, and that all other disciples would receive abundant rewards, both in this life, and in that which is to come. But, he adds, do not suppose that the earlier converts under the Gospel dispensation will, on that account, be any more meritorious, or better rewarded, than those who, being called later, manifest an equal fidelity and zeal. The virtue and acceptableness of the act consisted, not in the time, but in the promptitude and conscientiousness with which the call was obeyed, whenever it came. Yea, even the first, as to time and privileges, may become inferior to the last, and the last become first. This parable has been supposed generally to refer to the calling of the Gentiles, and the equality they would hold with the Jews; but the interpretation above covers that ground and much more, and is more consistent with the general strain of the conversation. It hardly need be stated, that it has not a particle of allusion to the individual age at which persons become Christians, nor furnishes one iota of encouragement, for the efficacy of death-bed repentance. The successive hours correspond to different periods of the Christian dispensation, not to the seasons of human life. — *An householder*. A master of a family. — *Early in the morning*, i. e. the first hour, at six o'clock. — *Vineyard*. The cultivation of the grape was an important part of Jewish agriculture.

2. *A penny*. The Roman denarius or penny is equal to the Gre-

Digitized by Google

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing
4 idle in the market-place ; and said unto them : Go ye also into
the vineyard ; and whatsoever is right I will give you. And
5 they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and
6 ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he
went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them :
7 Why stand ye here all the day idle ? They say unto him : Be-
cause no man hath hired us. He saith unto them : Go ye also
into the vineyard ; and whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye re-
8 ceive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith
unto his steward : Call the laborers, and give them *their* hire,
9 beginning from the last, unto the first. And when they came
that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every
10 man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that
they should have received more ; and they likewise received
11 every man a penny. And when they had received *it*, they
12 murmured against the goodman of the house, saying : These
last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal
unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

---

cian drachm ; about fourteen cents. This was the usual pay of laborers and soldiers. Tobit v. 14.

3. *Third hour*, i. e. nine o'clock. — *Idle in the market-place.* Meaning, unemployed. This was the usual place for persons to resort to, in order to obtain hire, as well as to sell and buy goods.

4. *Whatsoever is right.* Or, reasonable. No specific agreement was made with those last hired.

5, 6. *Sixth—ninth—eleventh hour.* At twelve, three, and five o'clock respectively. The different periods are here represented at which persons became the disciples of Jesus, according as they had opportunities of doing it. — *Why stand ye here all the day idle?*

"The God of glory walks his round,
From day to day, from year to year;
And warns us each, with awful sound,
'No longer *stand ye idle* here!'

Recall us to thy vineyard, Lord!
And grant us grace to please thee there!"

8. *When even was come.* Or, six o'clock. — *Steward.* The overseer of the domestic economy. — *From the last unto the first.* This was done so that the first might not go away, but be present at the dialogue which followed.

9. The price may have been left unsettled with those who went last into the vineyard, that they might labor the more strenuously, by knowing that they would be paid according to the amount of work done, and not according to the time of labor.

11. *The goodman of the house.* The word is translated householder in verse 1. It is an old English term, now obsolete, to express the head of a family, without regard to moral quality.

12. *Have wrought but one hour.* As they were hired at the eleventh hour, or five o'clock, and left their work at even, or at six o'clock.

Digitized by Google

But he answered one of them, and said: Friend, I do thee no 13
wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take *that*
thine is, and go thy way. I will give unto this last even as 14
unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine 15
own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall 16
be first; and the first, last. For many be called, but few
chosen.

And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples 17
apart in the way, and said unto them: Behold, we go up to 18
Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the
chief priests and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn 19
him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock,

---

Reference is made in this part of the parable, it would seem, to Peter's inquiry, in chap. xix. 27, made as if he and his associates expected a greater reward than others, who entered later into Jesus' service.

15. *Thine eye evil.* Or, envious. An evil eye is used as an emblem of envy. Art thou jealous and grudging, because I am *good*, or gracious and liberal. The master of the house performed his promise, and therefore wronged no one by his generosity to the last laborers. God will dispense his gifts according to his own pleasure and benignity, and deal justly with all, however some may murmur at their own, or envy the lot of others. He is no respecter of persons, and Gentiles, as well as Jews, will share in his impartial love.

16. *So.* According to the illustration now given. Not the first called, but the most industrious, would be the most approved. The period of becoming disciples would make no difference in the rewards. — *Many be called, but few chosen.* A further proverbial expression, thought by some eminent critics to be an interpolation. An allusion is made, according to some, to the selection of soldiers for an army. Many shall be called to be disciples, but few shall be chosen, i. e. choice disciples.

17–19. Parallel to Mark x. 32–34. Luke xviii. 31–34.

17. *Going up to Jerusalem.* This was his last journey towards the holy city. As many others were probably on their way to the festival of the passover, he withdraws his disciples apart to communicate something of the deepest interest. Mark says, that Jesus went before them, and that they followed him in amazement and fear, thinking, perhaps, that their safety and lives would be endangered at Jerusalem. The fearless bearing of their Master awed and astonished them.

18, 19. *The Son of Man.* See note on chap. xi. 19. — *Shall be betrayed, &c.* The minuteness of this prediction, and its exact fulfilment, is a clear proof of the Saviour's prophetic and divine knowledge. This is the third time he had spoken of the unwelcome subject. — *Condemn him to death.* The Jewish Sanhedrim could not pass a judicial sentence of death upon him, or carry it into execution, but they could judge him to deserve such a sentence. Matt. xxvi. 66, xxvii. 2. — *To the Gentiles.* They would even call in the aid of the Gentiles, whom they abominated, to help

Digitized by Google

and to scourge, and to crucify *him;* and the third day he shall rise again.

20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children, with her sons, worshipping *him*, and desiring a certain thing of him.

21 And he said unto her: What wilt thou? She saith unto him: Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right

22 hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said: Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of? and to be baptized with

---

them in their bloody crime. All these particulars were exactly fulfilled. He was betrayed by Judas into the hands of the chief priests and Scribes. By them he was adjudged worthy of death. He was handed over to Pontius Pilate, was mocked by Herod and the soldiers, was scourged, crucified, and on the third day was raised from the dead. None but a supernatural foresight could have anticipated these particulars; for, as has been observed, humanly speaking, it was much more probable that he would be privately assassinated, or stoned in some transport of popular fury, or by order of the Sanhedrim, than that he should be thus sentenced to crucifixion, a Roman punishment, with which he had never been threatened. Notwithstanding the plainness of his declarations, Luke tells us, that his disciples "understood none of these things," for they still labored under the infatuation of expecting his temporal glory.

20–28. Parallel to Mark x. 35–45.

20. Though the curtain of a dark future had just been lifted by Jesus, this infatuation was illustrated anew by the mother of two of the Apostles, James and John. Her name was Salome. Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark xv. 40, xvi. 1. Her own services to Jesus, the special favors he had bestowed upon her sons, and the promise in Matt. xix. 28, emboldened her to prefer this ambitious request. According to Mark, the sons themselves, James and John, are the supplicants. Both the mother and her children were probably concerned in the application; for Matthew states, she came *with her sons*. They shielded themselves under their mother's mediation, from the rebuke which had already been administered to the aspiring. Matt. xviii. 3.

21. *One on thy right hand, and the other on the left.* Their imagination was possessed with the figure which Jesus had used of *sitting upon thrones*. That glittering prospect dazzled their eyes, and they could not see or understand, that sufferings and death awaited their Master and themselves, before they could reign in their spiritual glory. In reference to eastern customs, they desire the highest places of confidence and honor with Jesus, indicated by sitting on his right and left hand.

22. *Ye know not what ye ask.* For they mistook the nature of his kingdom. How many parents know not what they ask for their children, when they desire pleasures, possessions, and honors of this world, for them! For, without the jewel of virtue, they will be poor and miserable indeed, however rich or distinguished. — *Cup that I shall drink of.* An image of his future suffer-

Digitized by Google

the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him: We are able. And he saith unto them: Ye shall drink in- 23
deed of my cup; and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give; but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father. —— And when the ten heard *it*, they 24
were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But 25
Jesus called them *unto him*, and said: Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so 26
among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, 27

---

ings. Ps. xi. 6, lx. 3; Isa. li. 17; Matt. xxvi. 39; John xviii. 11. — *The baptism that I am baptized with.* Another illustration, to the same purport. Martyrdom was called the baptism of blood; repentance, the baptism of tears, in oriental speech. Can you meet the dangers and sufferings I am destined to undergo? This clause is, however, expunged from the text in this and the next verse, as spurious, by Griesbach and other great critics. — *We are able.* Little they knew of the thorny path they were to tread. Their fancied strength was weakness, their bright hopes a bubble. Still, their words were, in some sense, prophetic; for in due time they were able to do and suffer gloriously, submitting to banishment and death, on account of their crucified Master. Acts xii. 2; Rev. i. 9.

23. You shall, is the spirit of the reply, share in my toils and sufferings; the cup of sorrow, the baptism of blood, shall be yours; but to bestow the dignities of my kingdom is not in my power, except as they are allotted by my Father. The words in Italics were introduced by the translators, and had better be omitted. The reference of his own will to his Father's shows us, as clearly as language can show, that he was a created, dependent being, not the original, uncaused Power.

24. *They were moved with indignation.* The ten were offended with the other two, as making a request against their interests. Ambition is always indignant at ambition.

25. As Jesus had before rebuked their ambition by the presence of a child, so now he uses a new illustration, to quell their aspiring temper. Calling them together, he directs their attention to the political rulers of the times, among pagan nations, who domineered and tyrannized over their subjects. Luke xxii. 25. Among them, ambition and rivalry were to be expected. But—

26, 27. *It shall not be so among you.* Rather, let it not be so among you. Such a grasping disposition is wholly inconsistent with the principles of my religion, and the office your are to sustain in proclaiming it to the world. — *Your minister.* Your servant. The true greatness of my followers will spring from humility and the benevolent offices of charity and good will. The useful are the great, the good are the glorious. "Only in loving companionship with his fellows does man feel safe, only in reverently bowing

Digitized by Google

28 let him be your servant ;· even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

down before the higher does he feel himself exalted." On what a stupendous and world-wide scale have the sentiments of meekness and humility here inculcated been transgressed by the Roman Church, in its vast temporal authority, its arrogant claims, and its spiritual tyranny!

28. *Even as the Son of Man.* To carry the lesson home still deeper, he presents the highest model for their imitation, in lowliness and usefulness. Even the Messiah himself, with all his power and dignity, came not into the world to receive the homage of men, to be applauded and admired, but to minister to man's wants, to meet the cravings of his undying nature, and to melt the heart to penitence by the power of the cross: thus consecrating himself, and even laying down his life, as a ransom, or as a means of deliverance, for the human family. His own example, therefore, in condescension and self-sacrifice, is a bright pattern for his disciples to copy; a potent corrective of their selfish ambition. — *To give his life a ransom for many.* Or, to ransom many, i. e. "to deliver them from the evils of ignorance, error, and sin." Wakefield supposes *many* to refer to the sacrifices under the Jewish laws, *one* ransom to be given instead of many. But the more common and better opinion is, that *many* refers to mankind, to all men. The word here translated *ransom* signified originally the price paid for freeing a slave, and therefore, figuratively, any means of freedom from servitude. Thus God is said to have ransomed the Israelites, not by any substitution, but by the displays of his power. Ex. vi. 6; Deut. vii. 8; Luke xxiv. 21. Thus Jesus Christ has ransomed mankind, i. e. all who will comply with his religion, from the bondage of a sensual life, and raised them into the joys of a spiritual one. This verse affords no countenance to the popular doctrine of the Atonement; that something was necessary to reconcile an offended Deity to his erring children, and that Christ, in his death, supplied that want; for that would be to construe with a bald literalness, what, it is as plain as any principle in language can be, should be interpreted figuratively. If we say, Luther *redeemed* the Christian church, it is understood at once that we speak metaphorically. So ought this phrase to be taken. But all the great corruptions of Christianity, the doctrines of Total Depravity, Transubstantiation, Trinity, Election, as well as this of the Atonement, are attributable to the same cause, the construing of figurative language literally. When the doctrine of the Atonement was once established, this verse was then used as a proof of it, but it did not suggest it originally.

29–34. Parallel to Mark x. 46–52; Luke xviii. 35–43. There are two discrepances in this passage, comparing the accounts together. Matthew speaks of two blind men; Mark and Luke of but one. Matthew and Mark describe the cure as taking place when he left Jericho; Luke when he entered it. As to the number of men, some writers suppose that there were two, but that Mark and Luke mention only the most noted of them, a certain Bartimeus. Others conjecture that he healed them at different times, and that Mark and Luke speak of

Digitized by Google

And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude fol- 29
lowed him. And, behold, two blind men, sitting by the way- 30
side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying:
Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David! And the 31
multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their
peace. But they cried the more, saying: Have mercy on
us, O Lord, *thou* Son of David! And Jesus stood still, and 32
called them, and said: What will ye that I shall do unto you?
They say unto him: Lord, that our eyes may be opened. 33

---

only one case; at all events, they do not say that only one was cured. As to the other point, it has been suggested, that the expression, *was come nigh unto Jericho*, may without violence be translated, *was in the vicinity of Jericho*, and agree, therefore, with Matthew and Mark, who state that he did the cure as he departed from the town. A theory of two towns, the old and new Jericho, has been advanced, and that he did the cure as he departed from one and approached the other. But, on the whole, perhaps, it is better in these cases to admit that there may have been some contradiction, for the attempt to reconcile difficulties is sometimes overstrained. We would rather say, with Bloomfield, "that, if the trifling discrepances adverted to were really irreconcilable, still they would not weaken the credit of the Evangelist, being such as are found in the best historians; nay, they may be rather thought to strengthen their authority as independent witnesses."

29. *Jericho.* This city, next in importance to Jerusalem, and situated about twenty miles northeast from it, and five from the Jordan, was the scene of many interesting events in the Jewish history. It was overthrown by Joshua, Josh. vi. 21–26, and was afterwards rebuilt, 1 Kings xvi. 34, and contained a school of the prophets, 2 Kings ii. 5. It was called "the city of palms," from the number of these trees growing around it. It is now an insignificant village, called Richa.

30. *Sitting by the way-side.* The most favorable place to beg, and hear the news. — *O Lord, thou Son of David.* This appellation of the Messiah they might have caught from hearsay, and used it as a conciliatory token of respect. Or, "suffering under a sore misfortune, they were naturally disposed, far more than others, to feel the force of the evidence which Jesus gave of his authority, and to think lightly of the circumstances that seemed to weaken that evidence."

31. *Because they should hold their peace.* Rather, *that* they should hold their peace. — *They cried the more.* It was their only chance. They fear that the opportunity may be lost for ever. They are therefore instant and importunate, and send their piercing cries through the dense multitude to the ears of Jesus. What naturalness is there in this circumstance, that, unable to see Jesus, they should try to arrest his attention by their boisterous cries! The multitude rebuked them, thinking, perhaps, that it was beneath Jesus to notice these blind beggars, or impatient that his journey or his discourse should be interrupted, anxious or curious as they were to hear every word that dropped from his lips. Mark adds the descriptive

Digitized by Google

34 So Jesus had compassion *on them*, and touched their eyes; and immediately their eyes received sight; and they followed him.

CHAPTER XXI.

The public Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. — Miracles and Parables.

AND when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two dis- 2 ciples, saying unto them: Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her; 3 loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me. And if any *man* say ought

---

circumstance, that, "casting away his garment," as impeding his haste, the blind man "rose and came to Jesus."

34. *Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes.* Showing that the miracle proceeded from himself. Our Saviour did not coldly and mechanically perform his miracles. Although he was surrounded by admiring disciples and a thronging multitude, he yet had time and thought to bestow on the unfortunate, that lay by the roadside, poor and blind. Although on the way to his own crucifixion, and filled with its approaching terrors, he still had a heart to sympathize with, and a hand powerful to succor the miserable. His potent touch unsealed the blinded eye. His everlasting Gospel still goes the rounds of the world, as its author walked in Palestine, mighty to shed light and comfort over the darkened mind of man. Reader, you do not possess your Saviour's divine power, but you can cherish his divine sympathy for the sick and wretched.

CHAP. XXI.

1 – 11, 14 – 16; Mark xi. 1 – 11; Luke xix. 29 – 44; John xii. 12 – 19.

1. *Drew nigh unto Jerusalem.* See chap. xx. 17, 18, 29. — *Were come to Bethphage*, i. e. were on their way. Mark and Luke also speak of Bethany. The two villages were situated at the foot of the Mount of Olives, on the east side, and their territories were contiguous. Bethphage signifies *house of figs;* Bethany, *house of dates;* from which it has been conjectured that those trees abounded there. — *Mount of Olives.* Or, Olivet. A high ridge lying east from Jerusalem, so called from the olive trees growing upon it, and of which a few remain to the present day. The valley of Jehoshaphat, or of Hinnom, and the brook of Kedron or Cedron, lay between this mountain and Jerusalem.

2. *The village over against you.* Bethphage. — *An ass tied, and a colt.* The ass is a fine animal in the east, and much used in common life, as the Jews were forbidden to keep horses, lest they should be prompted to conquests. Some, however, violated the prohibition. — *Bring them.* The other writers speak only of the colt or young ass, as that was the animal on which Jesus rode. Both were sent for, as they would go better together, one being the mother, and the other her colt. It was to a friend or acquaintance probably that Jesus sent, who would be willing at once to loan his beasts, when he knew who wished for them. Mark and Luke mention

Digitized by Google

unto you, ye shall say: The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done that it might 4
be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "Tell 5
ye the daughter of Sion: Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."
And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, 6
and brought the ass, and the colt; and put on them their 7
clothes, and they set *him* thereon. And a very great multitude 8

---

that the colt never had been used for labor, and we are told that it was a custom to employ animals, that never had borne the yoke or saddle, for sacred uses. Deut. xxi. 3; 1 Sam. vi. 7. Jesus foresaw what would befall him in a few days, and he made this public entry into Jerusalem to fix the attention of the people upon himself, and thus give the greatest publicity to his death, resurrection, and other attendant events.

3. *The Lord.* Simply, the Master. That would be a sufficient reason to him.

4. *That it might be fulfilled.* Or, according to Wakefield, so as to fulfil. Jesus' peaceful entry into Jerusalem corresponded with Zechariah's description of the Messiah, an analogy which, according to John xii. 16, the disciples did not at first understand, but perceived it after Jesus was glorified. — *The prophet.* Zech. ix. 9, also Isa. lxii. 11. The sense, rather than the exact words, seems to be regarded by Matthew.

5. *The daughter of Sion*, i. e. the city of Jerusalem, so called from Mount Zion on which it was built. A poetical personification of cities was common among the orientals. — *Meek, and sitting upon an ass.* The horse was used in war, but to ride upon an ass was an emblem of peace. By this symbolic act, Jesus presented himself to public notice, not in the character of a haughty monarch, riding upon a spirited charger, and fulfilling the worldly expectations of his countrymen, but as a lowly and peaceful prophet riding upon an humble ass. In the earlier periods of the Jewish commonwealth, to ride upon an ass was a mark of the highest distinction; Judg. v. 10; 2 Sam. xvii. 23; but in later times, as the number of horses increased in Judea, the ass was resigned to the use of the poorer people, and to ride upon it became a mark of poverty and lowliness, as would seem to be indicated by the saying of Zechariah. Even in his most triumphant hour, Jesus would declare the pacific character of his kingdom.

7. *Put on them their clothes*, i. e. on both the animals, not knowing on which Jesus would ride, or as an honor to him. 2 Kings ix. 13. The garments served the purpose of a saddle. — *Set him thereon*, i. e. on the colt; for though the original has it *on them*, yet that was a popular idiom, used probably because both had been spoken of before. The sense is, on one of them. Judg. xii. 7. The other Evangelists mention only one animal. Some understand *thereon* as referring to the clothes on which they placed Jesus

8. *A very great multitude.* One circumstance which had drawn together this crowd, was the interest produced by the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. Besides, vast multitudes congregated at this time at Jerusalem, and Jesus had

Digitized by Google

spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches
9 from the trees, and strawed *them* in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying: Hosanna to the Son of David! blessed *is* he that cometh in the
10 name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest! —— And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying:
11 Who is this? And the multitude said: This is Jesus the
12 prophet, of Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus went into the

become known through the country and therefore attracted their notice. John xi. 56. — *Spread their garments in the way*, i. e. their outside garments, their mantles or cloaks. 2 Kings ix. 13. These acts were insignia of respect and honor, paid to one whom the fickle multitude at the time seem to have regarded as the veritable Messiah. As the branches were boughs of the palm-tree, John xii. 13, and were flat, they would not obstruct the way. They were emblems of victory and peace. It has been customary in all ages, to offer similar tokens of honor to the great and distinguished, and to strew flowers, garments, and branches in their way. Myrtle boughs were thrown in the path of Xerxes, the king, as he advanced into Greece. Our own day has witnessed spectacles not dissimilar.

9. *Hosanna.* Compounded of two Hebrew words, *Save now*, or, *Save, we beseech thee.* It was an acclamation of reverence and joy, used at the feast of tabernacles, and here employed to express their welcome of the Expected One. It has some similarity to the modern expression, "God save the king." — *Hosanna to the Son of David.* Signifies, God save the Son of David. — *Blessed is he that cometh, &c.* Ps. cxviii. 25, 26; Luke xix. 38; John v. 43. — *Hosanna in the highest*, i. e. with supreme praises, or, in the highest places, or heaven. Save now, thou who dwellest in the heights. Luke ii. 14. From the differing accounts of the historians, we may infer that the jubilant voices uttered a variety of enthusiastic salutations and praises. Spontaneous and gratifying as was this public homage, Jesus clearly looked beyond it all, and foresaw how soon, under altered circumstances, the multitude would cry, Crucify him, crucify him.

"Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Hark! all the tribes Hosannas cry!
Thine humble beast pursues his road,
With palms and scattered garments strewed.

"Ride on, ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die!
O Christ! thy triumphs now begin
O'er captive death and conquered sin!"

10. *All the city was moved.* The previous fame of Jesus, the shouts of thronging multitudes, and the tokens of joy and triumph which attended the procession, naturally stirred the people with mingled emotions of fear and hope, curiosity and hatred, wonder and veneration.

11. *The prophet, of Nazareth.* This would imply that they still regarded him more as a prophet, like John or some one of the old prophets, than as the mighty Messiah of intense Jewish hope.

12, 13. Parallel to Mark xi. 15–19; Luke xix. 45–48. Matthew appears to neglect the order of this transaction, which properly belongs between verses 19 and 20, in order to recite in one paragraph continuously the account of the withering of the fig-tree. We learn, from

Digitized by Google

temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and said unto them: 13 It is written: "My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." And the blind and the 14 lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. And 15 when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying:

Mark xi. 11–15, that this was not done on the day of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, but the day after, he having passed the night in Bethany.

12. *Into the temple of God*, i. e. the outer court of the temple, whither Gentiles were accustomed to resort. Jesus had before made a similar purification of the temple. John ii. 13–17. — *The money-changers.* Or, brokers, persons who exchanged the coin of the Jews, which was necessary for those who paid the usual taxes and contributions to the temple, and took in return Roman and other foreign coin. — *Them that sold doves.* The poor, who were unable to purchase larger animals, were allowed to offer doves for sacrifice. Lev. v. 7, xii. 8. These traffickers had stationed themselves in the courts of the temple, for the convenience of trading, to provide for the approaching festival.

13. *It is written.* Isa. lvi. 7; Jer. vii. 11. Jesus, with a reference to the prophets whom they respected, expressed his detestation of their dishonesty and overreaching in trade, and their profaning the precincts of the most holy temple. — *A den of thieves.* Robbers. Reference is here made to a custom common to robbers of all countries, to take refuge in caves. It is unnecessary to suppose that any miraculous power was exerted on this occasion. Jesus was already known as a distinguished individual. His very boldness awed them, and encouraged the impression that he was a prophet, and therefore, according to the opinion of the times, had a right to regulate these things. Their own consciences too might secretly subdue any inclination to resist. But we find here no traces of sedition, or of a political attempt on the part of Jesus, for he was the sole actor, and though no resistance was offered, no other acts of a similar kind were afterwards performed. We learn too an incidental proof of the Roman toleration, under the sanction of which a private Jew could thus vindicate, without opposition, the sanctity of his temple. Our Lord would cleanse even the court of the Gentiles from fraud and desecration, that the proselytes of the gate, so called, or those who did not conform to the Jewish ceremonial, might worship God in peace. This transaction, therefore, instead of arguing a Pharisaical punctiliousness, may be regarded as a proof of his liberality, which would provide for the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, a fitting place for worship.

14, 15. We are here carried back again to what occurred on the day of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, which had been interrupted by the episode of the cleansing of the temple. — *The wonderful things.* Alluding, probably, to his entrance in triumph, and his miracles of healing. — *The children.* Luke xix. 39. Understood by some commentators to be the servants, i. e. the disciples

Digitized by Google

Hosanna to the Son of David! they were sore displeased, and
16 said unto him: Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus
saith unto them: Yea; have ye never read: "Out of the
mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise"?
17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany, and
he lodged there.
18 Now in the morning, as he returned into the city, he hun-
19 gered. And when he saw a fig-tree in the way, he came to it,
and found nothing thereon, but leaves only; and said unto it:
Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And pres-

---

or followers of Christ; for the original word is rendered thus in most places in the New Testament. — *Sore displeased.* Highly displeased. The cause of their displeasure is indicated in John xii. 19. They were envious of his popularity, as tending to obscure their own.

16. Luke relates still another incident; that the Pharisees requested Jesus to check his disciples; but that he told them, that the very stones would cry out if man should be dumb on so glorious an occasion. — *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, &c.* Ps. viii. 2. According to the conjecture of the last verse respecting the children, we understand these to be, not babes in years, but in spiritual attainments. Matt. xi. 25.

17–19. Parallel to Mark xi. 11–14.

17. *Bethany.* As this was the village of Lazarus and his sisters, it has been plausibly conjectured that he made their house his home at this time. Mark informs us that he was accompanied by the Twelve. What more palpable proof could there be against the theory advanced by some, of Jesus' aspiring to political power, than the fact, that, after his triumphal procession, when the people was ripe for revolution, and the whole nation was congregated in the holy city, Jesus retires to a quiet village and humble friends to pass his nights? He thus escaped any plots against his own life, and avoided any occasion of popular tumult that might be raised in his favor. Besides, the calm scenes of Mount Olivet were more congenial to his mind, than the din of a crowded city. How unambitious and beautiful was his retiring to Bethany, after thousands had saluted him with every mark of royal honor! This humility bears the palm alone.

18, 19. As Jesus was returning into the city from Bethany, fully bent on his great duties, he suffered hunger; an evidence of his absorption in his work, and forgetfulness of his bodily wants. He finds a fig-tree by the roadside, and therefore belonging to no one. The original is more exact, one fig-tree, one among many, a fig-tree that was distinguished from others. Mark says, that "the time of figs was not yet." It might be asked, then, why he went to it, expecting fruit. The answer is, that, as the fruit of the fig-tree appears before the leaves, and as this tree was covered with leaves, it was reasonable to expect that it had fruit. As it was not the usual time for gathering figs, none were expected from any tree but this, because, perhaps, no others had leaves, the indication of

Digitized by Google

ently the fig-tree withered away. And when the disciples saw 20
it, they marvelled, saying: How soon is the fig-tree withered
away! Jesus answered and said unto them: Verily I say 21
unto you, if ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do
this *which is done* to the fig-tree, but also, if ye shall say unto
this mountain: Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the
sea; it shall be done. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask 22
in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

---

fruit. It was not likely that the fruit had been picked, for the fig harvest was not yet. Failing of receiving physical nourishment from the tree, Jesus makes it an instrument of spiritual good; the highest use to which any object can be put. Not in the petulance of disappointment, but with a calm power, seeking to impress his disciples, he devotes the tree to barrenness henceforth, and it soon withered away. Perhaps this event had some connexion with the parable of the fig-tree, Luke xiii. 6–9. He would teach the value of faith, as we learn from verse 21, by a symbolical action, a frequent method in the east. This lesson was especially needed by the disciples, standing as they did, on the eve of mighty events that would try their faith severely. Most commentators have drawn also another moral from the event, that of the unfruitfulness and destruction of the Jewish nation, to which, covered over as it were with the leaves of good professions, our Lord had come seeking fruit, but finding none.

20–22. Parallel to Mark xi. 20–26.

20. *The disciples saw it.* This was on the next morning, as they went from Bethany to Jerusalem. — *How soon is the fig-tree withered away!* Or, according to Winer, How did the fig-tree wither away so quickly? The miracle astonished them the more as being unusual, out of the ordinary course of Jesus' miraculous deeds, and startling on account of its suddenness.

21. *This mountain.* The Mount of Olives. A similar hyperbole concerning this very mountain is found in Zech. xiv. 4. See note on Matt. xvii. 20; xviii. 19. In general, they would be able, if they had faith, to perform the greatest miracles for the promotion of religion; not that literally the plucking up and casting of a mountain into the sea would be a proper act to perform. The Jews called those who were most distinguished as teachers, for genius and virtue, *rooters up of mountains*, or capable of overcoming the greatest difficulties. The gift of working miracles was limited to the apostolic age, and there are no trustworthy accounts of its having been since possessed or exercised.

22. *Believing, ye shall receive.* Mark, in the parallel passage, states forgiveness, as well as faith, to be a condition of efficacious prayer. If the declaration was applicable only to the Apostles, the sense would be, that God would grant them, in answer to believing prayer, all things necessary to their office. If the promise was more extensive, it announces that whatever shall be asked in prayer, in a confiding spirit, shall be received. For a good man will pray that only what is consistent with God's will may be given him. His devotions will always

Digitized by Google

23 And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and
the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching,
and said: By what authority doest thou these things? and who
24 gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto
them: I also will ask you one thing; which, if ye tell me, I in
like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things:
25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?
And they reasoned with themselves, saying: If we shall say:
From heaven; he will say unto us: Why did ye not then be-

---

have this saving clause, If it be the Divine pleasure. Prayer is therefore eminently an act of faith, a referring of all things to God, a full confiding in his goodness, as able and willing to grant us, if not the identical objects of our petition, yet what is far better. We have, in 1 John v. 14, 15, the Christian philosophy of prayer.

23–27. Parallel to Mark xi. 27–33; Luke xx. 1–8.

23. *The chief priests and the elders of the people.* Members of the Sánhedrim, and perhaps, making the inquiry with the authority of that body. Jesus had now returned from Bethany to Jerusalem, and whilst walking in the temple and teaching his disciples and auditors, he met these insidious men. They proposed these two questions, What was Jesus' authority, and, From whom he derived it. For he had entered the city in triumph, hosannas had been shouted by the people, he had cleared the courts of the temple of merchandise, and healed the sick and preached the Gospel in the sacred places, without asking permission from the Sanhedrim, the Jewish ecclesiastical court.

24. Our Lord did not wish to elude the question, or merely to confound his adversaries, and disappoint them by not explicitly declaring himself to be the Messiah, as they expected. His motives were higher. According to the customs of the Jewish doctors, and even Grecian disputants, if any one proposed a captious question to another, the other had a right to ask one in return, and not to answer the question addressed to him until his own had received a reply. The question of Jesus showed with what consummate wisdom he could involve them in their own snare. He took the wise in their own craftiness.

25. *The baptism of John.* Or, better, according to Newcome, *by* John. The leading feature in his office stands for his whole ministry. Baptism was his striking peculiarity, and the epithet of *the Baptist* was always joined to his name. — *From heaven, or of men?* From God, or of merely human authority? Jesus had already given every reasonable proof of his own divine commission. If his miracles and instructions were not convincing, nothing could be sufficient to persuade his wilful opponents. But the question he now proposes brings them to a dilemma from which all their adroitness could not set them free. — *Why did ye not then believe him?* i. e. in his testimony of me? If John's mission was authorized by God, they would be inexcusable in not being his followers. The Saviour could also draw another inference from this fact, that if John came from God, he was not alone to be believed and followed, but also

Digitized by Google

lieve him? But if we shall say: Of men; we fear the people; 26
for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and 27
said: We cannot tell. And he said unto them: Neither tell I
you by what authority I do these things. —— But what think 28
ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first,
and said: Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered 29
and said: I will not; but afterward he repented, and went.
And he came to the second and said likewise. And he an- 30
swered and said: I *go*, sir; and went not. Whether of them 31
twain did the will of *his* father? They say unto him: The
first. Jesus saith unto them: Verily I say unto you, that the
publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before

Jesus, to whose Messiahship he had often testified, and of which he was the forerunner. If they acknowledged John as being from heaven, they must acknowledge Jesus to be also. If they could not pronounce upon John's baptism, they were certainly incompetent to decide upon the claims of Jesus.

26. *We fear the people.* Luke adds, that they "will stone us." As their reasoning with themselves to fix upon an answer showed their total want of truth, so this confession argued their moral cowardice, lest they should commit themselves. Jesus had answered them so that they could find no handle of accusation against him. What depth of sagacity.

27. *We cannot tell.* A palpable falsehood, for their very querying with themselves proved that they knew the whole subject throughout. There are none so blind as those who will not see. — *Neither tell I you, &c.* As the question of Jesus required to be answered first, and they had confessed their inability, he was released from the obligation of making them any reply. As they had pleaded ignorance, he takes them at their own word, and infers their incompetency to be judges in the matter. Still, in the subsequent parables he indirectly informs them, what was the nature and source of his authority, and their guilt in resisting it. The wounds which Jesus inflicted upon the spiritual pride of the Scribes and Pharisees, and his detection of their hypocrisy, so exasperated them, that they could only be satisfied with his crucifixion.

28. The object of the following parable is to rebuke them for disbelieving John; the object of the one succeeding it is to condemn them for rejecting Jesus. — *A certain man had two sons.* — Under this figure Jesus describes two classes; the Scribes and Pharisees, and the openly immoral and irreligious.

29, 30. *Repented*, i. e. changed his mind. By the son who expressed his willingness to obey, are represented the professedly religious, who yet in the end are the most hardened and guilty. By the other one, are imaged those who, openly vicious at first, afterwards repented and brought forth the fruits of righteousness. The condition of the hypocrite is more hopeless, than that of those in bondage to their appetites and passions.

31. *Of them twain*, i. e. which of the two. — *They say unto him: The first.* Thus condemning themselves

Digitized by Google

32 you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not after-
33 ward, that ye might believe him. ——Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower; and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a

---

out of their own mouth. — *Publicans, &c.* They were classed among the most vicious. They corresponded to the son who first refused, but afterwards went to the vineyard. Though disobedient and sensual, they had been more affected by the preaching of John, than the learned and respectable. They, who promised the least, performed the most; whilst they, who promised the worst, proved the best.

32. *In the way of righteousness.* Campbell translates it, *in the way of sanctity*, referring to the austerities of John's mode of life in the desert, in respect to food, drink, and clothing, which was severe enough to please the most punctilious Pharisee. Although they would not acknowledge John's divine authority, yet, as he came in the way of righteousness, preaching reformation, and practising virtue, their not believing on him was a mark of their ill dispositions. — *But the publicans, &c.* See Luke vii. 29, xvi. 16. See note on Matt. xi. 12. Great moral revolutions proceed from the lower to the higher, rather than from the higher to the lower classes of society. The mightiest changes in history have been effected by the instrumentality of the obscure, the forgotten, and the despised. — *When ye had seen it, repented not.* You not only failed to repent as soon as the vilest sinners, but, even after you had seen their repentance, the good effects of John's influence upon them, you still continued impenitent.

33–46. Parallel to Mark xii. 1–12; Luke xx. 9–19.

33. The object of this parable is to condemn the Jews for their unbelief and rejection of the prophets and the Messiah himself, as that of the preceding was to reprove them for their impenitence under the preaching of John. The same imagery is found in Isa. v. 1–7. The householder represents God, the husbandmen the Jews, the servants the prophets and wise men sent from time to time to recall the nation to their allegiance, the son is Jesus Christ. It is a historical view of Jewish disobedience, containing also a prediction of Jesus' death. — *Householder.* Master of a family. — *A vineyard.* Judea was favorable for the cultivation of the vine. — *Hedged it.* Or, fenced it. It was a custom to enclose vineyards with walls, or fences, or hedges of thorns. — *Digged a wine-press*, i. e. a wine-trough, or vat. We learn from Mark xii. 1, that the upper vat or press, in which the grapes were trodden by men, is not meant here, but the lower receptacle, into which the liquor flowed through a grated opening from the upper one. The lower cistern was dug in a rock, or the earth, and plastered. Chardin, the modern traveller, found vats built in this way in Persia. — *Built a tower.* The tower was a place of abode for the keepers, who pro-

Digitized by Google

far country. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he 34
sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive
the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and 35
beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he 36
sent other servants, more than the first; and they did unto
them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, say- 37
ing: They will reverence my son. But when the husband- 38
men saw the son, they said among themselves: This is the
heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.
And they caught him, and cast *him* out of the vineyard, and 39
slew *him*. When the lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, 40
what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him: 41
He will miserably destroy those wicked men; and will let out
his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him
the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them: Did ye 42
never read in the Scriptures: "The stone which the builders

---

tected the vineyard from the depredations of men and animals.—*Went into a far country*. The original simply is, *went away*, or *went abroad*, without specifying whether far or near. It would be absurd to seek a particular moral correspondence to every circumstance in the parable. The hedge, the wine-vat, the tower, are ornamental.

34. *The time of the fruit*. The season of gathering the fruit.—*Sent his servants*, i. e. the prophets.—*Might receive the fruits of it*. It was a custom to pay the rent *in kind*, or with a part of the produce.

35, 36. *Beat one, and killed another, &c.* This had been historically true of Jeremiah, the prophets in the time of Elijah, and Zechariah, not to speak of others. Luke xiii. 34; Heb. xi. 37; 1 Sam. xxii. 18; 1 Kings xix. 10; 2 Chron. xxiv. 21, 22, xxxvi. 16; Neh. ix. 26; Jer. xxxviii. 6.—*More than the first*. Not in number, but of greater dignity and honor.

37. *Sent unto them his son*. God, finally, commissioned his son with an embassy, to bring his chosen people to a sense of their duty. Although he had sent many prophets, and they had been persecuted and slain, yet the riches of his compassion were not exhausted, but he still gave a beautiful manifestation of his long-suffering and love, by sending his beloved Son. For, though they had maltreated his previous messengers, yet it seemed that they would surely reverence the brightness and image of God.

39. *Slew him*. A virtual prediction of Jesus' own death.

40. *The lord*, i. e. the owner.

41. *Miserably destroy those wicked men*. To preserve the paronomasia, or play upon words, contained in the original, Campbell translates it, he will put those *wretches* to a *wretched* death. This remark is ascribed by Mark and Luke to Christ, and not to his hearers. These diversities are to be expected in independent writers, and bear witness to the honesty of their accounts.

42. *In the Scriptures*. Ps. cxviii. 22, 23.—*The stone which the build-*

Digitized by Google

rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is
43 the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes"? There-
fore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from
you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.
44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on
45 whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. —— And
when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables,
46 they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought
to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude; because they
took him for a prophet.

ers rejected, &c. Having led them by his parable to condemn themselves out of their own mouth, he proceeds to bring home the application more pointedly to the Jews, quoting for this purpose a passage from their Scriptures, in which reference is made to architecture. The stone, which was laid aside as worthless, by the builders, finally becomes the main strength and ornament of the edifice. So it was in things spiritual. The stone despised by Jewish builders proved to be the Rock of ages, the chief corner-stone, — the crucified Jesus, to be the Messiah of the world. — *Head of the corner.* Not the foundation, but the uppermost stone of the corner, which binds all below it firmly together. Some critics ingeniously transpose the 42d and 43d verses, so that the 41st and 43d, the 42d and 44th verses, come together, as the sense seems to require.

43. *The kingdom of God shall be taken from you.* The ecclesiastical superiority of the Jews shall be destroyed. Their privileges shall be taken away, and given to a nation, i. e. the Gentiles, who will be more faithful, and, in the language of the parable, render the owner the fruits in their season. This has been fulfilled. The hearers of Jesus could no longer mistake his meaning, after he had made this declaration.

44. An evident continuation of the metaphor in verse 42, expressing the different degrees of criminality and punishment of neglecting and rejecting the Christ. Isa. viii. 14. Criminals in the east were sometimes put to death by being thrown from a pillar or eminence upon a rock below, or, if that did not terminate life, large stones were cast upon them to crush them. Jesus probably alludes to this custom. Whoever runs against the corner-stone, whoever is offended with Christ, shall injure himself; but he on whom it falls shall be ground to powder; they who reject and persecute me shall perish miserably.

45, 46. Mark xii. 12. *A prophet.* But not *the* prophet, the Messiah. His parables were so simple, and his application so direct, that they could not mistake his meaning, and their anger was kindled to such a flame, that they were ready to do him personal violence on the spot, if his popularity had not been so great as to overawe them. But they bided their time, wove more thickly the meshes of their conspiracy, and, ere many more days had elapsed, they had so far turned the tide of popular favor by their cabals, as to be able to gratify their envenomed passions.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXII.

The Parable of the Marriage Supper. — Conversations of Jesus.

AND Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said: The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, 2
which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants 3
to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying: Tell 4
them which are bidden: Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and *my* fatlings *are* killed, and all things *are* ready; come unto the marriage. But they made light of *it*, and went 5
their ways; one to his farm, another to his merchandise. And 6
the remnant took his servants, and entreated *them* spitefully, and slew *them*. But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth; 7

CHAP. XXII.

1. *Jesus answered and spake.* Proceeded to speak. A similar parable is related, Luke xiv. 15–24.

2. *Kingdom of heaven.* The administration of the Gospel. — *A marriage.* More properly, a marriage feast. The object of this parable appears to be similar to that of the vineyard let out to husbandmen, in the last chapter. The Gospel was first proffered to the Jews, but they rejected it, as a nation, and were destroyed by the Romans. It was then made free to the Gentiles, whom they esteemed the offscouring of the world. Stories resembling this parable are found in the Rabbinical writings.

3. *Call them that were bidden.* It has been said by some critics, that it was an ancient usage to invite the guests sometime beforehand, and then summon them again to the entertainment, when it was nearly ready. An allusion seems here to be made to two invitations.

4. *Sent forth other servants.* There is a moral significance to this feature in the parable. For God suffereth long and is kind, and urges repeatedly his messages of love upon the attention of mankind, through various dispensations, and by the ceaseless flow of his blessings. — *My dinner*, i. e. my feast, without reference to the time of day. — *Fatlings*, i. e. fatted animals, of whatever kind. It was agreeable to ancient simplicity to speak thus familiarly. Similar instances are frequent in Homer, one of the oldest poets in the world.

5, 6. It was considered a breach of the law of God, and an affront of the greatest indignity, to neglect a marriage festivity. Two classes are here described, the trifling and worldly, the malignant and persecuting. The bulk of the Jews heeded not the Gospel invitation, because they were devoted to business and pleasure; but some, the Scribes and Pharisees, chief priests and elders of the people, were not satisfied with silent neglect and contempt, but proceeded to open acts of hostility against Jesus and his Apostles. — *Entreated them spitefully.* Or, rather, treated them injuriously, barbarously.

Digitized by Google

and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers,
8 and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants: The
wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.
9 Go ye, therefore, into the highways, and as many as ye shall
10 find bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the
highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found,
both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests.
11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a
12 man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto
him: Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding
13 garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to
the servants: Bind him hand and foot, and take him away,
and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping

---

7. *Destroyed those murderers, &c.* There is an evident allusion here to the destruction of the Jewish people by the Roman armies, and the burning of their temple and city. The cause of these national calamities was national wickedness. A long series of crimes and injuries committed, even against the messengers and Son of God, had "treasured up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." The eternal law thus vindicated itself with such awful sureness, that the chosen people themselves became but the more notorious examples of its execution.

9. *Highways.* Rather, crossings of the streets, or thoroughfares. It was customary with the rich men among the Jews, to invite all destitute strangers and travellers to their feasts. Jesus refers, in this part of the parable, to the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

10. *Both bad and good*, i. e. all sorts.

11. *Which had not on a wedding garment.* Those who attended upon such an occasion were expected to appear in an appropriate garment. The usual marriage dress was a white embroidered robe. According to many authorities, it was customary for the host to provide rich clothes for his guests, and to refuse to wear them would be a gross insult. Instances are cited from Homer, Diodorus Siculus, and modern travellers. Gen. xlv. 22; 2 Kings v. 22, x. 22; Esth. viii. 15. It is required of every Christian, that he be clothed with humility, and all the graces of the spiritual life, else his presence will be impertinent in the guest-chamber of his Lord.

12. *And he was speechless.* He had no excuse to offer for himself, for he had neglected to clothe himself with the garment provided by the hospitality of his entertainer. His sordid dress was not therefore an indication of poverty, which would have been excusable, but an evidence of contempt or indifference towards the king.

13. *Cast him into outer darkness.* See note on Matt. viii. 12. As entertainments were given in cheerful, illuminated rooms, to be driven out from them was to be thrust into the cold and darkness. In connexion with the binding of hand and foot, reference is thought to be had to confinement in a dark dungeon.—

Digitized by Google

and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few *are* 14
chosen.

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might 15
entangle him in *his* talk. And they sent out unto him their dis- 16
ciples, with the Herodians, saying: Master, we know that thou
art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest
thou for any *man*; for thou regardest not the person of men.
Tell us, therefore, what thinkest thou? is it lawful to give 17
tribute unto Cæsar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wick- 18

Weeping and gnashing of teeth. Images of grief and despair on account of the disgrace and mortification of being expelled from the nuptial feast.

14. See notes on Matt. xx. 1–16. All who come are not improved. There are many called guests, but few chosen or choice ones. Multitudes are invited to become Christians, but how few are really possessors as well as professors of the Christian life, hearty doers as well as hearers of the word of God!

15–33. Parallel to Mark xii. 13–27; Luke xx. 20–38.

16. *Then.* After the official delegation from the Sanhedrim, chap. xxi. 23, had availed nothing, it appears that they counselled together privately to accomplish his ruin. — *Entangle.* A word, in the original, having reference to the ensnaring of birds in a net. The force of the words, would be improved by leaving out *his*, which was the work of the translators, as is indicated by the Italics. The priests and scribes wished to draw from him some expressions in conversation that would furnish matter for accusation against him, either to the Romans or the Jews, and finally procure his death. We have, in the remainder of this chapter, an account of successive attempts, made by the leading classes of Jewish society, the Herodians, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Lawyers, to effect this object, and their total failure and discomfiture.

16. *Their disciples, with the Herodians.* The Pharisees sent their emissaries, with the Herodians, who are supposed to have been a political party, and disposed to uphold the dominion of the Romans over the Jews, and who were favorable to the adoption of Gentile manners and customs. Matt. xvi. 6; Mark viii. 15. Although the two sects were hostile to each other, they buried their mutual animosities, to unite in a common attack upon Jesus. — *We know that thou art true, &c.* According to Luke xx. 20, these spies were to "feign themselves just men," that they might thus the more successfully entrap him, and deliver him up to the civil authority. In pursuance of this plan, they address him with an insincere, though deserved eulogium. For of whom, more than of Jesus, could it ever be said, that he was true, taught the truth, and regarded neither the frowns nor the flatteries of men? Beautiful testimony of his enemies to his unsurpassed rectitude, and dauntless moral courage!

17. *Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar?* The Roman emperors were called by this appellation after Julius Cæsar, who first attained the imperial dignity. Tiberius Cæsar was at this time on the throne. The tribute, which the Romans exacted from Judea, in common with the

Digitized by Google

edness, and said: Why tempt ye me, *ye* hypocrites? Shew
19 me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.
20 And he saith unto them: Whose is this image and superscrip-
21 tion? They say unto him: Cæsar's. Then saith he unto
them: Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are
22 Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When

rest of their conquered provinces, was excessively galling to Jewish pride. It became a much agitated question, whether it was consistent with the Mosaic law, to pay this tax or not. Josephus relates, that Judas, a Galilean, Acts v. 37, raised a revolt, partly on this account, saying, that the taxation was no better, than an introduction to slavery. It was this question, with collateral and aggravating circumstances, which drove the Jews into their last fatal conflict with Rome. The inquiry seemed to involve Jesus in a dilemma, from which he could not escape. For, if he answered in the affirmative, his reply would conflict with the Mosaic law, Deut. xvii. 15; but if, in the negative, he would give occasion to be charged with sedition against the Roman government, Luke xxiii. 2. But his wisdom was superior to the wiles of his enemies.

18. *Wickedness.* More particularly, malice, craft. — *Hypocrites.* Dissemblers. Pretending, with great deference to his authority, to ask his decision, they were solely actuated by a desire to entangle him in difficulty.

19. *Tribute money.* The coin in which the tax was paid. — *A penny.* A denarius; a Roman silver piece of about fourteen cents.

20. *Whose is this image and superscription?* Or, inscription. The image was the head of the emperor. The inscription was, CÆSAR AUGUSTUS; OF SUBJECT JUDEA. It is said, that Julius Cæsar first stamped his image on the Roman coin. The invention was originally Persian.

21. *Render, therefore, unto Cæsar, &c.* Jesus drew his answer from the coin itself. As it had the emperor's image and inscription, it was an evidence that it was his, and, therefore, to be paid in tribute to him; for Roman coin could only circulate in Judea, when the land had become subject to the Roman government. It was a maxim of the Jewish schools, that, where the money of any king is current, there the inhabitants acknowledge that king for their lord. Since, therefore, it was proved, by the very fact of the coin, that they were a conquered people, they could do no less, than pay tribute to their conquerors. — *And unto God the things that are God's.* Referring, probably, to the annual tribute due to his temple, of half a shekel, twenty-eight cents. This admirable answer has passed into a proverb. The same thought is amplified in Romans xiii. 7. While the citizen maintains his allegiance to the powers that be, he is, also, to render that service to God, which is his due. The image of princes, stamped on their coin, denotes, that temporal things belong to their government. The image of God, stamped on the soul, denotes, that all its faculties and powers belong to the Most High, and should be employed in his service. Man's duties to human and Divine government do not clash. Jesus intimates, that the tribute was due to Cæsar, but they ought not to sacrifice their religion

Digitized by Google

they had heard *these words*, they marvelled; and left him, and went their way.

The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that 23
there is no resurrection; and asked him, saying: Master, 24
Moses said: "If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother." Now 25
there were with us seven brethren; and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased; and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, 26
unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. 27
Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the 28
seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto 29
them: Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are 30
given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

---

to any human power. He, therefore, silenced both parties, the seditious Pharisees, who were opposed to acknowledging their subjection to Rome, and the irreligious Herodians, who were in favor of sacrificing religion itself to their masters. He not only escaped the difficulty, but gave a wise and satisfactory answer, fitted to guide the doubting in the way of their duty. The knotty question was solved. His enemies departed, in confusion and wonder, at his answer.

23. *The Sadducees.* See note on Matt. iii. 7. — *There is no resurrection.* One of the articles of their belief. Acts xxiii. 8. Jesus scarcely overcomes one difficulty, ere another is presented to him. Gratified with his victory over their old foes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, with self-sufficient pride, make their assault.

24. Deut. xxv. 5, 6. This was the Levirate law, so called, which was designed to preserve estates in the same family, and continue families and tribes distinct from each other. — *Raise up seed unto his brother*, i. e. the children should be reckoned in the genealogy of the deceased brother, and enjoy his estate. It is not an exact quotation, but the substance of the law.

25. *Seven brethren.* Perhaps a supposed case, one too which they might have often employed against the Pharisees, in their controversy about a future state. — *Seven* is an indefinite number, of frequent use among the Jews.

28. *In the resurrection*, i. e. in the future state. Their prevalent notions of another life were very gross, and little raised above the actual condition of man in this world.

29. *Ye do err*, i. e. you deceive yourselves, by not considering the Scriptures, which, as Jesus shows in verse 32, contain traces of the doctrine of immortality; and by not reflecting on the power of God, who is able to raise the dead, and to form a new state, different from the present.

30. *In the resurrection, they neither marry, &c.* The relations of the present life, and the appetites of the body, will not exist there. — *Are as the angels.* Luke says,

Digitized by Google

31 But, as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read
32 that which was spoken unto you by God, saying: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.
33 And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at his doctrine.

34 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sad-
35 ducees to silence, they were gathered together; then one of them, *which was* a lawyer, asked *him a question*, tempting him,
36 and saying: Master, which *is* the great commandment in the
37 law? Jesus said unto him: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy

"they are equal unto the angels," a general expression, to describe their similarity, as it respects the necessities of the body, and their immortality, for he says farther, "neither can they die any more." In one word, they are immortal spirits. 1 Cor. xv. 50. It is observable here, that Jesus, incidentally, confirms the belief in the existence of angels, a point which the Sadducees denied.

31, 32. Jesus proceeds, after having rebutted their objection, to propose an argument, level to their comprehension, and drawn from the Scriptures, which they acknowledged, in proof of a resurrection. — *I am the God of Abraham, &c.* Ex. iii. 6, 15, 16; Heb. xi. 16. This declaration was made long after Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, had died. As God cannot, with any propriety, be called the God of that which does not exist, the conclusion is a strong one, that, as he called himself *their* God, they did exist in another state of being. He does not say, I *was*, but I *am*, the God of Abraham. This was peculiarly a Jewish mode of reasoning. The Sadducees find themselves surpassed, with their own weapons of ingenuity and attack, and the people at large were astonished at the wonderful strength of Jesus' teaching, which prostrated the most subtile objections and wily stratagems of the Jewish doctors. According to Luke, even some of the Scribes remarked, "Master, thou hast well," in the original, beautifully, "said."

34–40. Parallel to Mark xii. 28–34.

34. *Had put the Sadducees to silence.* It was matter of exultation, that their great opponents, the Sadducees, had fared no better than themselves. — *Gathered together.* More exactly, gathered for the same purpose, i. e. to try Jesus with hard questions.

35. *One of them, which was a lawyer.* Mark calls him "one of the Scribes," i. e. a teacher or expounder of the law. — *Tempting him.* Whether in a good or a bad sense, is a question. It has been suggested by some of the Christian Fathers, that the man came with an evil intention, but departed better disposed. Some have supposed, that the lawyer mentioned here, and the Scribe spoken of in Mark, were different persons.

36. *Which is the great commandment in the law?* It was one of the subtile refinements of the Jewish theologians, to divide the law of Moses into greater and less commandments, and to determine what precepts belonged to each class, and

Digitized by Google

God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the 38 39
second *is* like unto it; "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy-

what was the most important one. Some maintained that the ceremonial, others, that the moral, commands were the greatest. See note on Matt. v. 19.

37. Deut. vi. 5; Lev. xix. 18. — *With all thy heart, &c.* Mark adds, "with all thy strength." These are intensive expressions, signifying, that God is to be the chief object of our love, engrossing our affections, and calling forth the whole energies of our nature. In Mark, this is preceded, as in Deuteronomy, by a solemn annunciation of the strict unity of God. How would it be possible to fulfil the commandment, if two or more beings, alike perfect, were presented to our affections? To love God, we must know him in his true and beautiful character, and feel that he is supremely lovely. To love him supremely will render obedience to all his laws a pleasure, and will assimilate us, more and more, to his image and blessedness. He should reign in the hearts of his children, as over the works of his creation, unrivalled. The nature and effects of such a love are happy beyond description. As the sun makes bright and beautiful all it shines upon, so does this affection transform the whole soul into its own divine nature. As God is holy, so is it holy; as he is benevolent, so is it benevolent; as he is infinite, so it stretches itself forth without limits; absorbing the strength of the spiritual nature into itself; powerfully pervading the whole inner world; purifying, brightening all; starting into being the noblest thoughts, designs, and hopes; and, having glowed with increasing fervor, through the chills of life, it shall not be extinguished by the damps of death, but rise and burn purer and purer in heaven.

38. *First and great commandment.* Says a writer, "It is so in its *antiquity*, being as old as the world, and engraven originally on our very nature; in its *dignity*, as directly and immediately proceeding from, and referring to God; in *excellence*, being the commandment of the New Covenant, and the very spirit of the divine adoption; in *justice*, because it alone renders to God his due, prefers him before all things, and secures to him his proper rank in relation to them; in *sufficiency*, being in itself capable of making men holy in this life, and happy in the other; in *fruitfulness*, because it is the root of all commandments, and the fulfilling of the law; in *virtue* and *efficacy*, because by this alone God reigns in the heart of man, and man is united to God; in *extent*, leaving nothing to the creature which it does not refer to the Creator; in *necessity*, being absolutely indispensable; in *duration*, being ever to be continued on earth, and never to be discontinued in heaven."

39. *Is like unto it*, i. e. in its importance. The love of man is intimately connected with the love of God. Philanthropy and piety are sister sentiments. It was a doctrine of the Pharisees, that the strict observance of one precept would atone for the neglect of others. But Jesus inculcates obedience throughout, both in our relations to God and to man. — *Thy neighbor.* A comprehensive term, meaning any one with whom we have to do, or who needs our aid.

"Our neighbor is the suffering man,
Though at the farthenest pole."

Digitized by Google

40 self." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked
42 them, saying: What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?
43 They say unto him: *The son* of David. He saith unto them:
44 How then doth David in spirit call him Lord? saying: "The Lord said unto my Lord: Sit thou on my right hand, till I
45 make thine enemies thy footstool." If David then call him
46 Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer

— *As thyself.* *As* means not equal in degree, but similar in kind. Matt. vii. 12. See note on chap. xix. 19.

40. *Hang all the law, &c.* Mark adds, "There is none other commandment greater than these." These commands are so familiar to us, that we cannot understand, how striking they must have appeared to the Jews, who had confounded the important and the unimportant, and were entangled in the nets of sophistry, woven by their teachers. The law and the prophets are founded on these two grand commandments. Rom. xiii. 9. Love to God is the basis of piety; love to man, that of morality. Love is the golden chain that binds man to man, and all to God. Some have conjectured, that an allusion is made here to writing the laws and hanging them up in a public place, to be read by the people.

41–46. Parallel to Mark xii. 35–37; Luke xx. 41–44.

41. Having silenced the Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, and Scribes, with his wonderful answers, he takes an opportunity, when the Pharisees were together, to put their wisdom to the proof, as they had his. His question, however, was not designed chiefly to confound his opponents, for that motive was unworthy of him, but to lead them to more elevated views of the Messiah, as being of higher dignity than a temporal king, and to rebut the objection, doubtless used by the Pharisees with effect among the common people, that one, who appeared like an ordinary individual, as Jesus did, could not be the great Deliverer.

42. *Of Christ.* In the original, of *the* Christ, i. e. of the ancestry and dignity of the Messiah. — *Whose son is he?* Rather, whose son is he to be? He did not speak of himself, as our version implies, but of the Messiah they expected. — *The son of David.* This was the current opinion, drawn from their Scriptures.

43, 44. *In spirit.* Under a divine impulse. Ps. cx. 1. — *The Lord said unto my Lord.* Jehovah said unto my Lord or Master. — *On my right hand.* It was customary for persons, next in dignity to the king, to be seated on his right hand. — *Make thine enemies thy footstool.* A figure, derived from the practice of the victor, putting his foot upon the neck of the vanquished, as a mark of subjection.

45. If David address him with so honorable a title, how is that consistent with his being his son? The only key of explanation lay in the fact, that the Christ was to possess a spiritual superiority, that he was to be, not a mere earthly prince, like David, but a spiritual deliverer, the Saviour of the world. Acts ii. 36.

46. *No man was able, &c.* Be-

Digitized by Google

him a word; neither durst any *man*, from that day forth, ask him any more *questions*.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Jesus' Condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees.

THEN spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying: The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 2
All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe 3
and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do

---

cause they looked upon the Messiah as a temporal ruler, and, therefore, not differing from David in the kind, though he might in the degree, of his power and dignity. The question could not be answered, therefore, because they took a low view of the character and office of their Messiah. Jesus would elevate their minds to nobler conceptions. He had so effectually answered his opponents by his divine wisdom, and confounded them on their own grounds, that they were too much awed, to venture again, by asking him questions, to expose their own weakness and folly. He had, however, only silenced, not convinced them. Foiled in the arts of discussion, they resort to different and darker, but more successful means, to arrest his influence. As we proceed farther, in this wonderful history, how much is there to admire, how much to love, how much to imitate in our blessed Lord! It should ever be the effect of studying his life, to inspire us with a more devoted trust and obedience to him. For in him is life, and light, and everlasting happiness.

CHAP. XXIII.

1–14. See Mark xii. 38–40. Luke xx. 45–47.

1. During the last days of Jesus' life, he is recorded as delivering many discourses, both to his disciples and to the people. In the following chapter, he warns the multitude, in the most pointed manner, to beware of the influence of their hypocritical teachers. His hour is rapidly approaching, and he hesitates not to expose the Scribes and Pharisees, in all their moral deformity, before his hearers.

2. *The scribes and the Pharisees.* See note on chap. iii. 7. — *Sit in Moses' seat.* In reference to the sitting posture, in which Jewish doctors were accustomed to explain the law. They were the received expounders of the Mosaic religion.

3. *All, therefore, whatsoever, &c.* It is likely that they interpreted much of the law correctly. The expression is a general one, subject to exceptions, and denoting that they were to be hearkened to, so far as they taught in harmony with the Scriptures. — *After their works.* But their example was as carefully to be shunned. A comparison is probably intended here, that they should do rather as the Pharisees said, than as they did, without enjoining that all their instructions should be received with implicit confidence. Warburton points out the magnanimity of our Saviour, in reconciling the people to their teachers, and bidding them hearken to their instructions, though they were not to copy their example. An impostor, or a fanatic, would not have done this.

Digitized by Google

4 not. For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not
5 move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men. They make broad their phylacteries,
6 and enlarge the borders of their garments; and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the syna-

4. *Bind heavy burdens.* Acts xv. 10. They did so by multiplying traditions and ceremonies, and insisting on them, as of equal importance with moral precepts. An allusion is here made to loading beasts of burden with an excessive weight. The Scribes and Pharisees would not even lighten or steady their burdens with the tip of one of their fingers, a proverbial phrase. They were severe towards others, but indulgent towards themselves. Having urged the claims of obedience with great severity, they did not supply those mild and gracious motives, that would render obedience pleasant. Has not this picture been repeated from age to age, and appeared even in our own day? Has not the tone of theology been harsh, dogmatical, and denunciatory, rather than mild and winning? Have not burdens been put upon human nature heavier than it can bear?

5. *They do for to be seen of men.* To the charge of oppression, he adds that of ostentation and ambition. So far as they did conform to their precepts and ceremonies, they acted from a vitiated motive. He goes on to particularize. — *Make broad their phylacteries.* These were scrolls of parchment, worn on the forehead and the left arm. They were inscribed with passages of the law, usually these: Ex. xiii. 1 – 10, 11 – 16; Deut. vi. 4 – 9, xi. 13 – 21. The same were inscribed on their door-posts. The custom of wearing them, arose from a too literal interpretation of Ex. xiii. 9, 16; Deut. vi. 8. Great holiness was attached to them, and they were regarded as amulets or charms, to keep off evil spirits. The following is an extract from a Jewish Targum: — "The congregation of Israel hath said, I am elect above all people, because I bind my phylacteries on my left hand and on my head, and the scroll is fixed to the right side of my gate, the third part of which looks to my bed-chamber, that demons may not be permitted to injure me." The word *phylacteries* is derived from a Greek verb, *to keep*, in reference either to keeping the law by the use of them, or to their keeping or protecting a person, by their supposed magic power. — *Enlarge the borders of their garments.* These were the fringes or tufts, worn on their mantles, to distinguish them from other nations, and remind them of God's laws. Numb. xv. 38, 39. Their ostentation was manifested in making these phylacteries and fringes broad and conspicuous, as badges of their greater sanctity, Mark xii. 38, Luke xx. 46, and thus making their garments long.

6. *Uppermost rooms at feasts.* More correctly speaking, the highest places at table. The Jewish table extended around three sides of an oblong square, with one end open, on the outside of which, were couches ranged for the guests to recline upon, and within which, servants could enter to wait upon them. The most honorable place, or the uppermost room, was at the end, which connected the sides of

Digitized by Google

gogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, 7
Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your 8
Master, *even* Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no *man* 9
your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in
heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Mas- 10
ter, *even* Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be 11

---

the square together. — *Chief seats in the synagogues.* These were near the pulpit, but faced the people, while the back was turned towards the speaker.

7. *Greetings in the markets.* Or, salutations in the most frequented places. They loved to be addressed in a formal manner, with great signs of respect, in the sight of the world. — *Rabbi, Rabbi*, i. e. doctor, master, teacher. This obnoxious and haughty title was introduced into the Jewish schools under a threefold form, as Rab, the lowest degree of honor; Rabbi, of higher dignity; and Rabboni, the greatest of all. The ambitious Scribes and Pharisees coveted these idle appellations.

8. *But be not ye called Rabbi.* Jesus would not have his disciples, in the exercise of their high office, as teachers of his religion, puffed up with this foolish love of distinction, so insidious and so fatal to a meek and humble temper of mind. James iii. 1. — *For one is your master.* The reason of his prohibition was, that they were upon an equality, Christ being their common Master. — *Christ.* This word has been left out of the text by Griesbach, as destitute of sufficient authority. — *And all ye are brethren.* This clause in several manuscripts is placed at the end of the next verse, where, according to the sense, it more properly belongs; as the mention of the fraternal relation would then be immediately connected with that of the filial. — It is clear beyond a doubt, from this and other passages, that Peter had none of that superiority among the Apostles, on which the claims of the Catholic church are founded.

9. A continuation of the same sentiment. They were not implicitly to submit to any teacher, as a child to a parent. They were neither to assume nor admit such an absolute domination. — *Upon the earth* is contrasted with *is in heaven.* You are not to look among the imperfections of earth, but in the heights of heaven, for one, upon whom you may fully rely. Of course, there is no prohibition here of children paying respect to their parents. — It is not a little remarkable, that the head of the dominant church in Christendom, in his sometimes greater than imperial authority, has, in all ages, been called by that very title, which is here forbidden, Papa, Pope, Father. So little has the doctrine of Christ been adhered to, by the great mass of his disciples!

10. *Masters.* Leaders, guides. This was a third title of honor assumed by the Scribes and Pharisees, as we learn from the Rabbinical writers. Because their epithets encouraged pride and spiritual tyranny, on one side, and subserviency and superstition, on the other, they were to be wholly discontinued among the equal children of a common Father, and the equal disciples of a common Master. In the bright light of these verses, what becomes of the doctrines of infallibility and divine right vested in any man, or body of men! what be-

Digitized by Google

12 your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be
abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.
13 —— But woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for
ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither
go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go
14 in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye
devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer;
15 therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto
you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea
and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye

comes of ecclesiastical usurpations and exclusiveness? They disappear like mists before the morning sun.

11, 12. He now points out the true and royal road to greatness, that of usefulness and humility. See note on Matt. xviii. 4. — *Abased — humble.* Words from the same Greek verb, which would be more properly translated alike. Jesus preaches no doctrine more often, than this of Humility, and none is more necessary to our being his real disciples, and entering into the deep and pure life of his religion. Covet humility; beautiful is "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

13. This and the next verse are transposed by Griesbach, and many other trustworthy scholars. — *But woe unto you.* Rather, alas for you. See note on Matt. xi. 21. It is congenial to our ideas of Jesus' character, to believe, that an unutterable pity mingled with his most searching rebukes. He wounded not to inflict pain, but to heal. To use the language of Wakefield: "*Woe unto you* is an exclamation better suited to the enthusiasts of modern times, who denounce damnation against all but their own sects, than to the benevolent Saviour of mankind." Matt. xxiv. 19. — *Scribes and Pharisees.* See note on Matt. iii. 7. — *Shut up the kingdom of heaven against men.* Or, in their faces as it were. The figure is taken from shutting and locking a door against those who were entering it. In accordance with this, they are described in Luke xi. 52, as having "taken away the key." They had done so by their example, instructions, and authority, and thrown all possible obstacles in the path of the Gospel. — *Neither suffer ye them, &c.* They were not content with remaining outside themselves, but they endeavored to prevent all others from going in. This churlish conduct reminds us of the fable of the dog in the manger.

14. *Devour widows' houses.* Or, estates. They were, furthermore, guilty of avarice, and, under the mask of great sanctity, they hesitated not to defraud those, who were peculiarly helpless and exposed, and who were taken in by their fair-seeming goodness. — *Long prayer.* Nine hours were daily spent by some in devotion. See note on Matt. vi. 7. For such mingled hypocrisy, covetousness, and oppression, they would be doomed to a severe punishment.

15. *Compass sea and land.* A proverbial phrase, signifying that they left no effort untried, or, as we say, no stone unturned, to gain proselytes to Judaism, or, more likely, to Pharisaism, doing it not

Digitized by Google

make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves.
Woe unto you, *ye* blind guides, which say: Whosoever shall 16
swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall
swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. *Ye* fools, and 17
blind! for whether is greater? the gold, or the temple that
sanctifieth the gold? And: Whosoever shall swear by the 18
altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is
upon it, he is guilty. *Ye* fools, and blind! for whether is great- 19
er? the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso, 20
therefore, shall swear by the altar sweareth by it and by all

---

so much from a religious as a covetous and ambitious motive; for they made a gain and a boast of godliness. There were two kinds of proselytes; 1st, the proselytes of righteousness, i. e. complete, who embraced the Jewish religion in its full extent, and shared in all the rites and privileges of Jews themselves; 2d, the proselytes of the gate; foreigners who lived among the Jews, who were not circumcised, yet conformed to some of the Jewish laws and customs; they were admitted into the outer division of the temple, called the court of the Gentiles. The Talmudists speak against proselytes, as injurious to the purity of their religion. — *Make him two-fold, &c.* Many critics translate this clause, Ye make him a child of hell *more deceitful* than yourselves. The simple idea is, that, by converting him, they made him far worse than themselves, for he probably retained his old errors, mixed with those of his formal, hypocritical teachers. — *Child of hell* is an expression signifying worthy of, or doomed to hell, or the severest punishment; as *the children of light* means those who enjoy the light.

16, 17. Next he censures their absurd and wicked distinctions respecting oaths, which they divided into great and small. See notes on chap. v. 33–37. — *It is nothing*, i. e. the oath by the temple is not obligatory. — *The gold of the temple.* Probably the money in the treasury is meant, not the ornaments, with which the building was decorated. — *He is a debtor*, i. e. is bound to fulfil his oath. Unusual sanctity seems to have been attributed to the gold in the temple treasury. It was corban, devoted. Mark vii. 11. Our Lord showed the futility of the distinction, by intimating that the temple was greater than the gold which it consecrated. It has been conjectured, that the Pharisees took advantage of the feeling of sacredness associated with this gold, to obtain greater contributions from the people.

18, 19. They also attributed peculiar sanctity to the offerings upon the altar, as is supposed, from selfish considerations. 1 Cor. ix. 13. — *He is guilty.* Rather, he is bound. The same word which is translated in verse 16, *he is a debtor.* It was absurd to believe that the gift could be more sacred than the altar, for it derived all its sacredness from the altar.

20–22. Jesus would sweep away their futile distinctions, and show that the validity of an oath depended, not on the particular thing by which it was taken, whether gift, altar, gold, temple, or heaven, but upon its tacit reference to God. Just so far as it was efficacious, by

Digitized by Google

21 things thereon; and whoso shall swear by the temple sweareth
22 by it and by him that dwelleth therein; and he that shall swear by heaven sweareth by the throne of God and by him that sit-
23 teth thereon. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin; and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. These ought ye to have done, and not to
24 leave the other undone. *Ye* blind guides! which strain at a
25 gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Phar-

---

appealing to objects consecrated to the divine service, so far was it obligatory, since it called God to witness. — *By him that dwelleth therein.* A visible symbol of the Divine presence, in the form of a cloud, rested upon the mercy-seat of the Holy of Holies. 1 Kings viii. 10, 11, 13. As God was the king of the Jews, the temple was his palace. In pursuance of the same idea, he is described as sitting upon a throne in heaven.

23. *Pay tithe*, i. e. a tenth part.— *Mint.* Sweet-scented, garden mint, or spearmint. It was strewed by the Jews on the floors of their dwellings. — *Anise.* A mistake of the translators for dill, an aromatic plant used by perfumers. — *Cummin.* An herb resembling fennel, with aromatic seeds of a hot and bitter taste. — The Scribes and Pharisees were not satisfied with paying the usual tithes for the support of the Levites and the poor, and for the service of the temple, Numb. xviii. 20–24; Deut. xiv. 22–24, 28, 29, but they paid also a tenth part of the small herbs. — *Have omitted.* Same word as is rendered below, *leave undone.* — *Judgment, mercy, and faith.* Mic. vi. 8. A more approved translation is, *justice, humanity, and fidelity*, the great social virtues, unless by *faith* we understand man's duties to God. Luke, xi. 42, has recorded it, "judgment and the love of God."—*These ought ye to have done, &c.* The moral duties should have been discharged, whilst the ceremonial observances should not have been neglected. He did not object to their scrupulousness in tithes, provided they kept the spiritual commandments; though, in reality, the two courses of conduct could hardly be reconciled in the same person.

24. *Strain at a gnat.* It is remarkable that this error, which was at first merely a blunder in printing, should have been so long perpetuated. The correct reading is, strain *out* a gnat. It was the custom in the east, where insects abound, to strain or filter wine through a cloth or sieve. The Jews did it, partly from fear of swallowing any creature that was unclean in the eye of the law, as well as from motives of cleanliness. What is here called *gnat* is said by some to be a small animalcule bred in the liquor. The camel was the largest animal, with which the Jews were much acquainted. Hence, the smallest insect and the greatest animal are employed to make the antithesis stronger. The phrase is proverbial, and is similar to one found among the Arabians: "He eats an elephant, and is strangled with a gnat." Jesus places, in bold relief, their inconsistency, in carefully observing the little points

Digitized by Google

isees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. *Thou* blind Pharisee! cleanse first that *which is* within 26
the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.
Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are 27
like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous 28
unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.
Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye 29
build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of

---

of ceremonial usage, and trampling under foot the first moral principles of religion.

25, 26. *Woe unto you.* See note on chap. xi. 21. The repetition of this phrase of condemnation carries with it an awful weight and solemnity. As he begins sentence after sentence with this word, it must have sounded in their ears like the first thunderings of those judgments, which were soon to roll over their nation. — *Make clean the outside.* They were attentive to the washings and purifications of the law, but neglected that moral and inward purity, without which, all forms were but a cheat and a lie. — *Cup* — *Platter.* The vessels for drink and food respectively. — *Within they are full of extortion and excess.* Instead of *excess*, Griesbach reads *injustice*, which would be more consonant to the known character of the Pharisees. However scrupulously their vessels were washed, they were yet filled with food procured by extortion and injustice, and therefore most foul and unclean. — *Cleanse first, &c.* See that their contents are the fruits of honesty and justice, and they will be truly clean. Purify the heart, and the conduct cannot be otherwise than pure, for streams take their quality from the fountain out of which they flow.

27, 28. *Whited sepulchres.* Tombs are said to have been annually whitewashed, that they might be seen and shunned; for it was an unclean act, according to the law, to touch them. Numb. xix. 16. Their whiteness, contrasted with the green herbage or groves, must have possessed a degree of beauty, but within there was death and corruption. So it was with these hypocrites. Precise in the observance of forms, sanctimonious in their deportment, zealous for the law, they were yet chargeable with the grossest immoralities and stained with the foulest crimes. Luke xi. 44.

29, 30. *Because ye build.* They were blamed, not because they paid marks of respect to the venerable dead, but because they did it hypocritically; because, whilst they thus honored the prophets and the righteous, they yet were ready to imitate their persecutors. — *Garnish the sepulchres, &c.* It was customary, both among the Jews and Gentiles, to show their reverence for the dead by building or beautifying their tombs. The Scribes and Pharisees pretended a respect for the martyred prophets, which they did not feel, for it was

Digitized by Google

30 the righteous, and say: If we had been in the days of our
fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the
31 blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto
yourselves that ye are the children of them which killed the
32 prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.
33 *Ye* serpents, *ye* generation of vipers! how can ye escape the
34 damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you
prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and *some* of them ye
shall kill and crucify, and *some* of them shall ye scourge in

---

wholly inconsistent with their real character. They adorned indeed their tombs, but they violated their instructions. Even after the time of Christ, there were many tombs of the ancient worthies still to be found in Judea, which had been erected or rebuilt long after their death. — *Partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.* Yet, at the same time they were indulging in a worse spirit than that of their persecuting forefathers, and desiring and plotting the death of him, who was greater than the prophets. They professed to honor the departed messengers of God, while they were ready to kill the Messiah, his Son.

31. *Ye are the children of them, &c.* They acknowledged that they were children, by natural descent, of those, who had slain the prophets of God. But, more than that, they were witnesses to themselves, they were conscious in their own hearts, that they were, in feelings and motives likewise, children of those bloody ancestors.

32. *Fill ye up then, &c.* The last verse may be regarded as parenthetical, and this one to be a conclusion drawn from the 30th. They pretended, that, if they had lived in the days of yore, they should not have been guilty of the barbarities of those periods; but they would go on, and in time fully equal the most wicked age. Despairing of their amendment, indignant at their hypocrisy, he says, Go on and fill up the measure of the sins of your fathers. A prediction is here expressed in the imperative mode, i. e. you will go on.

33. *Ye generation of vipers.* Better, brood of vipers. They possessed the venom and malignity of the most noxious reptiles. See note on chap. iii. 7. How then could they escape the severest punishment? The seeming harshness of this language is, perhaps, partly attributable to the oriental highly figurative mode of speech, which delights in the boldest metaphors, most startling paradoxes, and strongest hyperboles. Jesus spoke in the usual style. But until we possess his knowledge of mankind, and his authority from God, we are forbidden to judge our fellows and pronounce their condemnation. — *Hell,* i. e. Gehenna, or the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, where the filth of the city and the bodies of malefactors were thrown, to be consumed by fire and worms. Hence it was used as a figure for a keen and terrible punishment.

34. *Wherefore.* The *effect,* rather than the *design* of the teachers' being sent, is here expressed. — *I send* has the sense of the future. I will send. — *Prophets, and wise men, and scribes.* The Saviour applies Jewish titles to his Apostles, Evangelists, and disciples. — *Ye shall kill*

Digitized by Google

your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city ; that 35
upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the
earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of
Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the tem-
ple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall 36
come upon this generation.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and 37

and crucify, &c. These predictions were literally fulfilled in the early history of Christianity, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles. Stephen was stoned. James was killed by the sword. Some of the other Apostles were imprisoned, scourged, and driven from city to city; and, at least, four of the Twelve, according to tradition, were crucified.

35. *That* expresses the *consequence*, rather than the *design*. You have reached such a pitch of infatuation and wickedness, that the accumulated judgments of Heaven will eventually fall upon you for the slaughter of so many wise and good men. A figurative expression, describing their coming woes. They would be so overwhelming, as to seem sufficient for all the crimes that had been committed, from the creation of the world. — *Upon the earth*, i. e. the land of Judea. — *Righteous Abel.* Gen. iv. 8. — *Zacharias, son of Barachias.* He is probably the prophet whose death is related, 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21. The only material objection is, that he is called the son of Jehoiada. Luke does not mention the name of his father. As a solution of the difficulty, we may conjecture that the father of Zechariah had two names, as was frequently the case among the Jews, Barachias and Jehoiada. Thus Matthew is called Levi; Lebbeus, Thaddeus; and Simon, Cephas. Or, it is not wholly improbable, that some early transcriber, thinking only of Zechariah the prophet, the son of Barachias, wrote his name instead of that of Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, the murdered priest. This supposition may derive some additional strength, from the fact that Jerome found Jehoiada in a Hebrew Gospel of the Nazarenes. — *Between the temple and the altar.* This circumstance appears to harmonize with the account of the death of Zechariah, in Chronicles. The guilt of the crime was increased, if possible, by the sacred place, in which it was committed.

36. *All these things shall come upon this generation.* As much as to say, that the nation had sunk to such a state of degradation and wickedness, that it would be visited with judgments so overwhelming, as would seem to suffice for the crimes of all preceding ages. Josephus, one of their countrymen, an opposer of the Gospel, bears important, because impartial, testimony to their abandoned condition. He says, that they had carefully imitated, and even exceeded, all the most atrocious deeds of their ancestors. Though, at the time Jesus spoke, his predictions must have seemed highly improbable, yet that generation had not all passed off the stage, before all the vials of wrath were poured out upon their doomed city and country.

37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem.* How natural and expressive of deep emotion is this repetition of the word! Can any reader fail to see, that every page of the Gospels has some

Digitized by Google

stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her
38 chickens under *her* wings! and ye would not. Behold, your
39 house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say: Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord!

---

bright signature of truth and reality upon it, and that it would be a miracle of miracles, if these writings were the work of imposture or fanaticism! — *Killest the prophets, &c.* See notes on verse 35, and chap. xxi. 35, 36. — *Thy children.* The Jewish people, who often assembled at the holy city in obedience to the law, and who might be appropriately called her children. — *Hen gathereth her chickens, &c.* A figure full of beauty and pathos, to express his affection and interest for his country, and his earnest efforts to rescue it from impending destruction. 2 Esdras i. 30; Deut. xxxii. 11, 12. He had pleaded with the Jews in the most moving manner; he had urged them to repentance by every motive; he was about to appeal to them by the yet more affecting spectacle of the cross. But all was in vain. They were advancing obstinately towards the precipice of their ruin, and nothing could turn them aside. Luke xiii. 34, 35. This burst of patriotic lamentation for the coming overthrow of that city, so dear to the Jewish heart, is in striking contrast with the tremendous rebukes, he had just administered to the Scribes and Pharisees. It was thus, that the two elements of the severe and the gentle mingled harmoniously in his most heroic, yet humane spirit, and gave a divine perfection to his character. What power of reproof was joined to the most melting compassion! what magnanimity of soul, to weep over the city that was so soon to ring with the infernal cry, *Crucify him, Crucify him*, and whose inhabitants would exult at his agonies on the cross, as at some holyday spectacle!

38. *Your house is left unto you desolate*, i. e. the temple, of which the Jews were excessively proud. Perhaps he directed their attention, by a gesture of the hand and eye, to that glorious edifice, on which Jewish wealth had been lavished without measure, and around which, Jewish piety had thrown all its holiest associations, "the Earth's One Sanctuary." He could say nothing more awful than that that house should be overthrown from pinnacle to foundation. It appears, that Jesus now left it for the last time. It might truly be said to be left desolate even now, for it would no more resound with instructions of him, who was greater than the temple, and who carried in himself the Holy of Holies; the Shechinah of the Divine Presence. — By some he is understood to say, that the Jewish dwelling-place, i. e. country, would be left desolate.

39. *Ye shall not see me, &c.* A form of speech is used equivalent to his saying, You will no more have my presence among you; for they would never acknowledge him to be the Messiah. — In the sentence, *Blessed is he that cometh, &c.*, he alludes to the hosannas with which he was saluted on his entrance into Jerusalem, chap. xxi. 9; Ps. cxviii. 25, 26. Or, the sense of the verse may be, that my religion, of which I am the embodiment, will not again be addressed

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXIV.

Jesus prophesies the Destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, and exhorts his Disciples to Watchfulness.

AND Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and his disciples came to *him*, for to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them: See ye not all these 2 things? verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. —— And 3

to your attention, till you shall undergo, through the judgments of God, such an alteration in your feelings, that you will gladly say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, i. e. the Christ; till you shall submit to what would once have seemed most humiliating.

CHAP. XXIV.

1–42. Parallel to Mark xiii. 1–37; Luke xxi. 5–36.

1. *Departed from the temple.* As would appear, for the last time. — *To show him the buildings.* Full of admiration themselves at the grandeur of the temple, they call his notice to it, as if to say, Can so magnificent an edifice be left desolate, as you have predicted! Far from it. In their estimation it was as stable as the world itself. Between the different parts of the Gospel narration, as it proceeds, there are many fine and delicate connexions, which demonstrate, beyond a doubt, the truth of the history. We are not expressly told, why they invited his attention to the temple at that, more than any other time, but the context furnishes the reason, chap. xxiii. 38.

2. *See ye not all these things?* According to Griesbach, *not* should be omitted; but it would not essentially affect the meaning. Mark xiii. 2. — *Not be left here one stone upon another, &c.* We learn from Mark and Luke that the disciples had spoken with peculiar admiration of the "goodly stones and gifts." Jesus frames his reply accordingly. These very stones, said he, are destined to be scattered in the dust. Josephus states that the temple was built of stones which were white and strong, and that each in its length was 25 cubits, or 37 feet, in its height 12, and its breadth 18 feet. The prediction of our Lord was not, perhaps, in this verse, designed to be literal, but to express by a common figure, the utter overthrow of the temple. Yet it is remarkable, that the fulfilment was so exact, that one stone was not left upon another. Josephus, an eyewitness of the war, and whose history is a running commentary upon this portion of the Gospel narrative, says, that, with the exception of three towers, the wall was thoroughly laid even with the ground, and dug up to the foundation. Other Jewish writers corroborate this account, and state, that Terentius Rufus, the Roman general, left in command at Jerusalem after its capture, ploughed up the temple and the places about it; so that that saying was fulfilled, "Zion shall be as a ploughed field." We have, in this and the subsequent prophecies, an unanswerable proof of the divine foreknowledge, and authority of Jesus. No event so disagreeable to the Jews, or so unlikely to happen, could have then

Digitized by Google

as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying: Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the
4 world? And Jesus answered and said unto them: Take heed
5 that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name,
6 saying: I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled;

been predicted, as the destruction of their temple, "with its glittering masses of white marble and pinnacles of gold." The victor, whoever he might be, would be supposed to be desirous of keeping such a proud trophy of his success. Titus, the conqueror, sought to preserve it; but it was set on fire, in violation of his orders, by one of his soldiers, and could not be extinguished, though the greatest efforts were made to do it. Thus wonderfully were the words of Jesus fulfilled that had been uttered forty years before.

3. *Mount of Olives.* See note on Matt. xxi. 1, 2. From that elevation Jerusalem appeared as if lying beneath their feet. It was, probably, towards night, and the declining sun was brilliantly reflected from the splendid palaces, and from the vast temple towering over all with snowy whiteness. — *The disciples came*, i. e. James and John, Peter and Andrew, who enjoyed most of his intimacy and confidence. Mark xii. 3. Startled by his predictions, they are anxious to learn when they would be fulfilled. — *When shall these things be*, i. e. the destruction of the temple, verse 2. — *End of the world*, i. e. the Jewish world or dispensation. They were anxious to know how soon a new kingdom was to be established. Their ambition made them impatient.

4, 5. Jesus warns them against being deceived by false pretenders, who would come in his name, or arrogate to themselves his authority. He here distinctly acknowledges that he was the Messiah. — *Christ.* Should be *the* Christ. We are informed in Acts v. 36, 37, viii. 9, 10, xxi. 38, and by Josephus, that such, or similar impostors actually appeared, and led many into ruin. Simon Magus was called, by his deluded followers, the Great Power of God. Theudas, Judas of Galilee, Dositheus of Samaria, and an Egyptian, drew away great numbers after them, but they perished with their adherents. Josephus relates, "that in the reign of Claudius, who died about the year 54, the land was overrun with magicians, seducers, and impostors, who drew the people after them in multitudes into solitudes and deserts, to see the signs and miracles which they promised to show by the power of God." It may be here stated, as an interesting fact of history, that there appeared, between the reign of Adrian and the year 1682, no less than twenty-four false Messiahs, or impostors, claiming divine authority.

6. *Wars, and rumors of wars.* The history of those times shows the fulfilment of our Saviour's words. Six years after the death of Christ, the Roman emperor Caligula commanded his statue to be erected in the temple of Jerusalem. The Jews resisted this desecration with the greatest spirit, and a war would have ensued, had not the emperor in the mean time died. In one year and a half, four Roman emperors, Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, suffered violent deaths.

Digitized by Google

for all *these things* must come to pass; but the end is not yet.
For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against 7
kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and
earthquakes, in divers places. All these *are* the beginning of 8
sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and 9
shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my
name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall 10
betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many 11

The empire was thrown into tremendous convulsions, and its provinces filled with wars and rumors of wars. In Palestine, Syria, and Egypt, many thousands were slain, in the most horrible massacres. — *See that ye be not troubled.* They were not to be alarmed by these tumults, for, notwithstanding these events, the final overthrow would not occur immediately.

7. *Famines, and pestilences.* A famine was predicted by Agabus in Acts xi. 28, which, according to Suetonius, Tacitus, and Eusebius, took place in the reign of Claudius Cæsar. Josephus, in his Antiquities, b. 20, chap. 2, states that many people died of hunger at Jerusalem. Other famines are also related to have occurred during that period. Pestilences usually succeed famines, and are often produced by them, on account of the scarcity and badness of food. Josephus mentions one in Babylonia in the year 40, and Tacitus one in Italy in 66. — *Earthquakes, in divers places.* In the reign of Claudius an earthquake occurred at Rome, one in Crete, and others in Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, and other places. Tacitus mentions, that, in the reign of Nero, the cities of Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse, were destroyed, and Pompeii and Campania almost demolished by the same cause. Suetonius mentions one at Rome in the reign of Galba. Thus history, as written by Jewish and heathen authors, bears unanswerable witness to the fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecies.

8. *The beginning of sorrows.* All the preceding events, terrible as they were, were but the preludes to the woes that would follow, which were to be as overwhelming, as ever happened to any nation in the world.

9. One of the features of the coming times would be the persecutions of the Christians, not by one nation merely, but by all wherever they existed. Of this fact abundant evidence is furnished in the Acts and the Epistles. The first of the ten Roman persecutions took place under Nero, in whose reign the great Jewish war began. — *For my name's sake*, i. e. on account of your profession of my religion. Tertullian says, there was *nomini prælium*, a war against the very name of Christian. It was a common saying among the heathen, "Such an individual is a good man, only he is a Christian."

10. *Many be offended*, i. e. stumble, or apostatize from Christianity, in consequence of these persecutions. This was the historical fact. — *Shall betray one another.* This may be illustrated by a quotation from Tacitus, in his description of the persecution under Nero: — "At first several were seized, who confessed, and then by their discovery a great multitude of others were convicted and executed."

Digitized by Google

12 false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because
13 iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But
he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.
14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the
world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end
15 come. —— When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of
desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy
16 place (whoso readeth, let him understand,) then let them which

11. *Many false prophets shall rise.* Not false Messiahs, as in verse 5, but false teachers. 2 Cor. xi. 13; 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18. Or reference is, perhaps, made to those false prophets who, according to Josephus, were suborned by the tyrannical Zealots, who ruled the city of Jerusalem, to declare, that aid would be given to the people from heaven, while they were besieged by the Romans.

12. *Wax cold.* Become, or grow cold. On account of the cruel persecutions, the prevalence of wickedness, and the spread of false doctrines, the attachment of many to the Christian cause would decline. 2 Thes. ii. 3; Gal. iii. 1; 1 Tim. i. 19; Heb. x. 25.

13. Those Christians, who remained constant in their belief of the Gospel, would escape from the ruin of Jerusalem. Eusebius says: "The whole body of the church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a Divine revelation, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella."

14. *Preached in all the world*, i. e. the Roman world, which embraced nearly all the countries then known. Rom. i. 8, xv. 19, 24–28; Gal. i. 17; Col. i. 6, 23. We learn, both from the New Testament and profane writers, that the Gospel was propagated far and wide in Asia, Africa, and Europe, during the forty years that elapsed between the death of its founder and the overthrow of Jerusalem. The epistles of Paul, dedicated, as they are, to churches in various parts of the Roman empire, bear witness to the fulfilment of the text. Even persecution, as it drove the faithful from city to city, accelerated the diffusion of the truth. — *For a witness unto all nations.* Furnishing them with evidence of the excellence of the Gospel, as designed for Gentiles as well as Jews, and showing the justice of Heaven in visiting with its judgments the people, which had rejected and crucified its Author. — *Then shall the end come.* The end of the Jewish state and polity.

15. *The abomination of desolation.* Or, the desolating abomination, i. e. perhaps the Roman armies. Luke xxi. 20. They desolated the country and city. They were an abomination to the Jews, because their standards and ensigns had idolatrous images of their gods and emperors sculptured upon them, and therefore profaned the holy city with their presence. Hug, however, understands by the desecration of the holy place, which was to be the signal for flight, the possession of the temple by the Zealots, a band of robbers, who called to their aid the Idumeans, a heathen people, and polluted the sanctuary by making it a place of arms, and the theatre of the most detestable and murderous deeds. — *Spoken of by Daniel the*

Digitized by Google

be in Judea flee into the mountains; let him which is on the 17
house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house;
neither let him which is in the field return back to take his 18
clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them 19
that give suck, in those days! But pray ye that your flight be 20
not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day. For then shall 21
be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the

---

prophet. Dan. ix. 26, 27, xi. 31, xii. 11. — *Whoso readeth, let him understand*. These were undoubtedly the words of the Evangelist, as if he had said, Reader, attend. As Matthew wrote between the time when the prediction was made and its fulfilment, he warns the Christians to be on the alert, and observe the signal of flight to the mountains.

16. Instead of taking refuge in the city of Jerusalem, with the vain hope of its being able to hold out against the Romans, they were to seek safety in flight. The mountains with their caves and defiles would furnish a secure retreat. Besides, as the mountainous regions were at peace with the Romans, those who resorted thither would be safe. The disciples obeyed their Master, when the time came, and escaped to Pella, and other places beyond the Jordan. — The next four verses dwell upon the necessity of a speedy departure, when the signs of danger showed themselves.

17. *On the house-top, &c.* Houses in the east are constructed with flat roofs, upon which persons may walk and enjoy retirement. Stairs were built on the outside. Hence, an individual might descend without entering the house, or he might pass from house to house on the roofs. It is a figurative expression, implying that the utmost expedition was to be used. They were to flee at once, without delay. — *Anything out of his house*. Griesbach, with other critics, reads, *the things in his house*.

18. *Return back to take his clothes*. By which are meant the outer garments, which were laid aside during labor. Another sentence somewhat of a proverbial and hyperbolical kind, denoting the necessity of the greatest despatch.

19. *Woe unto them, &c.* i. e. alas for them, woe is them.

20. *In the winter*. On account of the cold storms of rain and hail, and bad travelling. This season has considerable severity in Judea, as we learn from the uniform testimony of historians and travellers. It is mentioned in the Jewish books, as the token of a gracious Providence, that, when the first temple was destroyed, the event occurred in summer, not in winter. — *Neither on the Sabbath-day*. Because on that day they were allowed to travel only a short distance. A Sabbath-day's journey was not far from one mile. This was granted the people to enable them to attend worship in their synagogues. The gates of towns and cities were also closed on the Sabbath-day. Neh. xiii. 19, 22. Most of the Jewish Christians would, of course, retain the scruples of their previous faith, in regard to travelling on that day.

21. *Great tribulation*. Luke xxi. 24. That the expression here used is not altogether hyperbolical is plain from the thrilling account of Josephus. He remarks, that, if the miseries of all mankind from the

Digitized by Google

22 world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those
days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but
23 for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if
any man shall say unto you: Lo, here *is* Christ, or there;
24 believe *it* not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false
prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch
25 that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Be-
26 hold, I have told you before. Wherefore, if they shall say

---

creation were compared with those which the Jews suffered, they would appear inferior. The siege of Jerusalem furnishes the bloodiest page in all history. One million and one hundred thousand perished in the city. The streets ran with blood. Multitudes were crucified outside the walls. Before the capitulation, the famine rose to such a pitch that the most loathsome substances were used for food, and a mother killed and devoured part of her own child. Deut. xxviii. 57. Nearly one hundred thousand were taken captive, of whom some were slain in cold blood; some were sent to the mines of Egypt; some were reserved to fight with wild beasts in the theatres; and others were sold as slaves. All that was most dreadful in ignominy or suffering, was concentrated in this awful overthrow. How vividly true the words of Jesus!

22. *Except those days should be shortened.* Josephus mentions various circumstances, which abridged the period of these unspeakable sufferings. The dissensions of the Jews among themselves very much hastened the crisis. Titus, the Roman general, was so struck with admiration at the vast strength of the walls as he surveyed them after the capture, that he exclaimed: "We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war, and it was no other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications; for what could the hand of man or any machines do towards overthrowing any of these towers?" — *No flesh be saved*, i. e. none who were engaged in this affair. — *For the elect's sake, &c.* Out of regard to the Jewish Christians, who had espoused the vital cause of the Gospel, that period would be shortened. Christians were called the elect, because they were now the chosen or the choice people of God.

23. *Lo, here is Christ, or there.* In times of such commotion, persons claiming to be the Messiah, would abound, for the Jews were intently looking for deliverance. See note on verse 5. Jesus warns his disciples not to trust these pretenders, since they were assured that the Christ had already come.

24. *Shall show great signs and wonders.* Acts viii. 9, xiii. 8, xix. 14. Shall profess to perform miracles; not that they would be actually competent to do it; for we have no evidence that the power of working miracles was ever granted to impostors or wicked men. Josephus relates that several made the attempt. — *If it were possible, &c.* More correctly, *if possible*, expressing not an impossibility, but extreme difficulty. Even Christians themselves would run the risk of being led astray by them. 2 Tim. iii. 13. This verse affords no countenance to the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints.

25. He reminds his disciples that

Digitized by Google

unto you: Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth; Behold, *he is* in the secret chambers; believe *it* not. For as the light- 27
ning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For where- 28
soever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. —— Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the 29
sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heaven

---

he had given them seasonable warning, and that they should, therefore, be upon their guard.

26. *He*, i. e. the Messiah. — *In the desert.* The remarkable coincidence of the fact with the prediction is shown by Josephus, who states, that many impostors and deceivers persuaded the people to follow them into the desert, promising to show them signs and wonders done by the providence of God. — *In the secret chambers*, i. e. retired places. As much as to say, that, while some would adopt one method, others would adopt another, to secure adherents. The Jewish historian relates that a vast multitude was decoyed into the temple, under the pretext, that the signs of deliverance would be there manifested, and that about six thousand of them perished in slaughter.

27. *As the lightning, &c.* He goes on to say, that they would not find the Messiah by resorting to the desert, the secret chambers, or any particular place, but that his coming would be sudden, startling, and splendid, like the lightning, filling the whole heavens, and flaming across from horizon to horizon. Thus conspicuous and terrific was the destruction of Jerusalem, in all its fancied strength, and the vain security of its inhabitants.

28. By *the carcass* is here represented the Jews, out of whom the true life had departed, and who had become, as it were, a carcass without the soul. By *the eagles* are to be understood the Romans, who, like eagles or vultures, would hasten to their prey, and whose ensigns were the figures of eagles. Wickedness soon attracts its retribution. Similar phraseology is found in other parts of Scripture. Deut. xxviii. 49; Job xxxix. 30; Lam. iv. 19; Hos. viii. 1. This prediction met with the most exact fulfilment. The Roman eagles hovered over the ruins of the once beautiful city, and preyed upon its wretched inhabitants.

29. *Shall the sun be darkened, &c.* These vivid figurative expressions are descriptive of the destruction of the city and nation of the Jews. As the sun, moon, and stars are the sources of light to the globe, and as their eclipse or destruction would be the most appalling of calamities, the imagery here used expresses, with intense power, the tremendous ruin impending over the devoted nation. The prophets often resorted to these brilliant figures, to portray the convulsions and overthrow of states and kingdoms. Isa. xiii. 10, 13; Ezek. xxxii. 7, 8; Dan. viii. 10; Amos viii. 9; Joel ii. 30, 31. We never shall understand the full and rich significance of the Sacred Scriptures, unless we remember, that they are written in a highly oriental, poetical style, which abounds far more in bold

Digitized by Google

30 shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son
of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth
mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds
31 of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his
angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather
together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven
32 to the other. —— Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; when
his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that

---

metaphors, personifications, and proverbs, than the writings of the colder western nations.

30. *The sign of the Son of Man in heaven.* The Jews had often demanded of Jesus signs and wonders. They would now witness them on a magnificent scale. His sign would appear in the heavens, his star be in the ascendant. — *The tribes of the earth*, i. e. of the land. The tribes of Israel. — *They shall see the Son of Man coming.* It will then be as clearly manifest, that he is the Messiah, as if he were actually present in person. — *In the clouds of heaven with power, &c.* Denoting the terribleness and majesty of his approach. Jesus had been persecuted, rejected, and crucified by the Jews, but the day of vengeance was at hand. His Gospel was soon to triumph gloriously in the world, while his enemies would be destroyed, their temple burnt, their city razed to its foundation, and their wretched nation dispersed to the four winds of heaven. Such were the signs and coming of the Son of Man.

31. *His angels*, i. e. his messengers, the Apostles, and early teachers of Christianity. — *With a great sound of a trumpet.* The Gospel with its thrilling messages, would resound, like a trumpet, through the world. — *They shall gather together his elect*, i. e. he shall, through the instrumentality of his disciples, gather together and form a Christian church and association of believers, an object which was accomplished after the destruction of Jerusalem; for the faithful in heart in every place were united by the Apostles and first preachers into a holy society, that might fitly be called elect or choice. — *From the four winds, &c.* i. e. from every quarter, from every nation. Acts ii. 9–11. Jesus Christ, as the second Adam, the spiritual Adam of a new human race, collected the elements of his church out of all kindreds and tongues and nations. The dispensation limited to one people was superseded by a universal religion.

32. *Learn a parable of the fig-tree.* Or, take an illustration from the fig-tree. Parable sometimes means illustration, comparison. — *Summer is nigh.* Rather, Spring. In Hebrew there are no terms to express Spring and Autumn. As certainly as Spring and Summer follow the leafing of the fig-tree, so surely shall the fall of Jerusalem succeed the signs before mentioned. As much as to say, the retributions of Providence will be as unerring, as the course of Nature. — Mount Olivet, on which Jesus was now sitting, abounded in figs as well as olive-trees. Though the mind of Jesus was filled with the pictures of astonishing events to come, we still find him gracefully drawing from Nature, at his side, the embellishments of his speech.

Digitized by Google

summer *is* nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these 33
things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors. Verily, I say 34
unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be
fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words 35
shall not pass away. —— But of that day and hour knoweth no 36
man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But 37
as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of
Man be. For, as in the days that were before the flood they 38
were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,
until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until 39

33. *All these things*, i. e. the signs he had before so graphically described — *It is near*. Or, *he*, the Christ, in his kingdom, is near.

34. *This generation shall not pass, &c.*, i. e. those then living would witness the fulfilment of Jesus' predictions; which was the case, for the destruction of Jerusalem took place about forty years after, and many then living were involved in the great catastrophe. John long survived the event, and Lightfoot speaks of some Rabbins who also outlived it. It is apparent from this verse, that Jesus had been previously speaking of the downfall of the Jews, not of future judgment. At the time Jesus uttered these words there was peace with the Romans, and no prospect of the Jews venturing to contend with them; or, if they did, of the temple, city, and nation being wholly destroyed. Yet forty years accomplished it all. What boundless confidence ought we ever to repose in the promises and warnings of Jesus, since he has so clearly established his claim of an unerring prophet!

35. *Shall pass away, &c.* This verse contains a Hebrew comparison. It is not asserted that heaven and earth *shall* pass away, but the essence of the declaration is, that they shall sooner pass away than my words fail. Compare Matt. v. 18 with Luke xvi. 17. The whole material universe shall sooner crumble to pieces, than the declarations of Christ be falsified.

> "Not earth stands firmer than thy word,
> Nor stars so nobly shine."

36. *But of that day and hour knoweth no man.* Or, no one. Jesus had mentioned many harbingers of the great event, but the exact time was disclosed to no one: neither to men, angels, nor to the Messiah himself; Mark xiii. 32; Acts i. 7; but was reserved in the omniscience of the Father alone. This must ever stand as an invincible proof of the superiority of the Father over the Son, an evidence clear as the sun at mid-day, that Jesus Christ is not God. To suppose, as is done by most commentators, that "Jesus said this of his human and not of his divine nature, and that one might know what the other was ignorant of, is to attribute a mental reservation to our Saviour, fit only for a Jesuit."

37 – 39. *Noe.* The Greek, of which the Hebrew form is Noah. — *They were eating and drinking, &c.* They were engaged in the ordinary occupations and amusements of life, when the deluge burst upon them; so the manifestation of the Son of Man, the overthrow of the Jewish state, would take the nation by surprise, while buried in a vain security, and still expecting some deliv-

Digitized by Google

the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the com-
40 ing of the Son of Man be. Then shall two be in the field;
41 the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other
42 left. Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord
43 doth come. But know this, that, if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken
44 up. Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye
45 think not, the Son of Man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his

---

erer would appear, though on the brink of ruin. — *Knew not*, i. e. regarded not, considered not, though forewarned by the righteous patriarch. Luke xii. 35, xvii. 34.

40, 41. *Then shall two, &c.* i. e. two men, as the word is masculine in the original. Men would be securely engaged in their usual affairs, — such is the general sense of these illustrations, — when they would be swept off, with such hurry and confusion, that the nearest associates would be separated from each other. Some interpret it, that a providential distinction would be made, one being lost, and another rescued. — *Two women, &c.* The machine for grinding grain in the east consists of a simple mill of two stones, a concave and a convex, turned one upon the other by a female hand. When the upper stone is large, or unusual despatch is required, two women are employed.

42. *Watch, therefore, &c.* This is a particular precept, adapted to that exigency. They were to be on the watch for the coming of those signs and wonders, that preceded the fall of the Jewish commonwealth, for their own personal safety and their usefulness to the world depended upon their vigilance. The precise hour and day were not known, they were therefore exhorted to be watchful. It is an exhortation worthy of our attention in every age; for the coming of the Son of Man to us individually, in the event of death, will be, we know not how soon or how sudden.

43. He proceeds more impressively to inculcate this duty by a parable. — *The good man of the house*, i. e. the householder would not have slept and suffered his house to be broken through, had he known, not the *hour*, but even so much as the *watch*, a space of several hours; but would have taken precautions of resistance. There were four watches during the night, of three hours each. — *Thief.* The correct translation is *robber*, one who steals with acts of violence or outrage, not the stealthy pilferer. — *Broken up.* Better, broken into.

44. *Therefore.* Since you are in a similar condition with the householder, and liable to be surprised at any moment, be on the alert, and suffer not the overwhelming catastrophe to come upon you unawares; for it will descend suddenly and unexpectedly.

45–47. Jesus continues still further to illustrate the need of vigilance and circumspection, by the parable of the wise and the evil servant. — *Whom his lord hath made ruler, &c.* To whom his master

Digitized by Google

household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that 46
servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.
Verily, I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all 47
his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart: 48
My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his 49
fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the 50
lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not
for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut 51
him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites;
there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

---

hath given the superintendence of the rest of the servants, to distribute the rations of food at the proper times, which, according to general custom, were monthly, as some critics maintain. — *Ruler over all his goods.* For his fidelity he would be promoted to the office of treasurer or steward. Luke xii. 42–46.

48, 49. *But and if.* But if. — *That evil servant.* But if the servant, thus intrusted with authority, should prove vicious and unfaithful, and should presume upon his master's absence, and begin to commit acts of outrage and oppression against the other servants, and to indulge in revelry, he would be surprised by his lord's unexpected return, and meet with condign punishment. The reference of this parable is, like the rest of the chapter, to the destruction of Jerusalem, for which the disciples were most solemnly warned to be ready.

51. *Shall cut him asunder.* A considerable difference of opinion has existed among expositors, relative to the nature of the punishment here described. Some have, like our translators, supposed that it was a literal cutting in two of the body, and cite, in proof of it, the custom of the east to punish criminals in that manner. But what follows, the appointment of his portion with the hypocrites, is inconsistent with his having been killed. Others, with greater probability, render the passage thus: will cut him off from his household, or discard him, and give him his portion, or punishment, with the unfaithful and perfidous, who only served, as hypocrites, with an eye-service. — *Weeping, and gnashing of teeth.* Servants, or slaves, who were unfaithful, were, according to Macknight, sometimes condemned to the mines; and as this was one of the severest of punishments, when they first entered, nothing was heard among them but weeping and gnashing of teeth, on account of their fatiguing and distressed life in those gloomy caverns, without the prospect of ever being released. — Though Jesus spoke for the special warning of his little circle of followers seated around him on the Mount of Olives, to prepare them for events that would descend upon that generation, yet his words have a wider and more lasting significance, and call forth an echo from the human heart everywhere. His followers of all times must watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation, watch for the coming of sickness, accident, and death, and be prepared to meet the will of heaven with submission, and God in peace.

"Whate'er its form, whate'er its flow,
While life is lent to man below,
One duty stands confest, —
To watch incessant, firm of mind,
And watch where'er the post's assigned,
And leave to God the rest."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXV.

The Parables of the Virgins, the Talents, and the Judgment.

THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten vir-

CHAP. XXV.

The following chapter contains three parables, familiarly known as those of the Virgins, the Talents, and the Judgment. Various interpretations of this passage have been proposed by different commentators. Some have referred the whole to the coming of Christ at the destruction of Jerusalem; others to a day of general judgment. While a third class unites both of these views, and considers the words of Jesus as containing two senses; a primary one, relating to his coming at the establishment of his religion on the ruins of Judaism; and a secondary one, his coming to judgment in a future state. Yet others believe the parables of the virgins and the talents to relate to the overthrow of Jerusalem, but the representation of the judgment, as limited in its application to another life. Great names, which it is needless to mention, have espoused these several views, and advanced plausible arguments to sustain them. But we would inquire, whether there has not been an unreasonable and injurious prominence given to the question of *time* in the interpretation of this chapter. Are not the words of our Lord rather designed to describe the establishment of his kingdom in a general sense? a kingdom, which would be set up more manifestly, indeed, at the fall of the holy city and the Mosaic system, but which was already enthroning itself in the hearts of his disciples, which would spread from them throughout the world, and last without end here and hereafter; a kingdom in which the duty of *watchfulness*, the faithful use of *powers*, and *means*, and the exercise of *love* and *benevolence* to others, in connexion of course with other virtues, would be of the highest importance, and a criterion of discipleship, as the several parabolical descriptions represent. This view would avoid the difficulties of double senses; or of an abrupt change in the discourse at the 31st verse, from speaking of the coming of Christ's kingdom at the overthrow of the temple, to an account of the scenes of eternity; or of forcing the whole chapter to refer to the future state, contrary to the use of language in verses 13, 31, *the Son of Man shall come, &c.*, which elsewhere is explained in allusion to the destruction of the Jews by the Romans; see chap. xvi. 28, xix. 28, xxiv. 27, 30, 34, 44. This view would also escape the rather frigid explanation which refers the whole, including the judgment scene, to the period of the fall of the Jews. It also harmonizes with the fact of the elevated tone of feeling, in which Jesus was then speaking and the solemn visions of his mighty kingdom, his universal religion, then rising and glowing before his mind. To his spiritual glance, Time was but an accident and a circumstance, Death but a night between to-day and to-morrow, a door between this apartment and that of the Father's mansion. He saw his kingdom coming in the hearts of men, searching, and trying, and judging them, erecting the standard of eternal rectitude, and, now and for ever, in all worlds and ages, connecting sin and misery, goodness and happiness together in bonds never to be broken. The above interpretation is in substance advanced by some eminent critics of a recent date.

Digitized by Google

gins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bride-
groom. And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. 2
They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with 3
them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 4
While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. 5
And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold, the bride- 6
groom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins 7
arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the 8
wise: Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But 9
the wise answered, saying: *Not so;* lest there be not enough
for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for

---

1. *Then* is used rather as an introductory word to the sentence, than as specifying a particular time. — *The kingdom of heaven.* The Christian dispensation, or the coming of Christ in his kingdom. — *To meet the bridegroom.* This refers to a marriage custom among the Jews and other eastern nations. It was usual for the bridegroom, accompanied by other young men, his friends, and attended by music, to go by night and wait upon his bride at her father's house, from which she returned to his home in a procession, in which her female companions joined carrying lighted torches or flambeaux. It is to the virgins, who attended on the bride and awaited the coming of the bridegroom, that reference appears to be had in the text. The whole company then repaired to the bridegroom's house, where the nuptial services were performed and the marriage feast held.

2–4. *Wise.* More exactly, *prudent*, and so throughout the parable. — *Lamps.* Or, torches made of iron or earthen ware, to which rags soaked in olive oil were attached, and which were carried on a wooden stick or handle. They gave a brilliant light, but needed replenishing, from time to time, with oil. Many circumstances in a parable are merely ornamental. Thus, *ten* was a favorite Jewish number, and has no special significance here.

6. An Armenian wedding is thus described by a traveller: — "The large number of young females who were present naturally reminded me of the wise and foolish virgins in our Saviour's parable. These being friends of the bride, *the virgins her companions*, (Ps. xlv. 14,) had come *to meet the bridegroom.* It is usual for the bridegroom to come at midnight; so that literally *at midnight the cry is made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.* But on this occasion *the bridegroom tarried;* it was two o'clock before he arrived."

7. *Trimmed their lamps.* Or, snuffed them, for they had burned low and dim, while they waited.

8. *Our lamps are gone out.* Or, going out or expiring. They had made no provision for the delay of the bridegroom, and were unable, therefore, to moisten their wasted torches with new oil.

9. *Not so.* These words were supplied by the translators, as is shown by their being in Italics. Some critics propose to drop them, and read the sentence thus: "Lest there be not enough for us and you, go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves;" *but* being

Digitized by Google

10 yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom
came; and they that were ready went in with him to the mar-
11 riage; and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other
12 virgins, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered
13 and said: Verily, I say unto you, I know you not. Watch,
therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein
14 the Son of Man cometh. —— For *the kingdom of heaven is* as a
man travelling into a far country, *who* called his own servants,
15 and delivered unto them his goods; and unto one he gave five

---

omitted in the original as spurious, by Griesbach and others.

10. *Marriage.* Marriage feast.— *And the door was shut.* The following is a description of a Hindoo wedding by Mr. Ward: — "After waiting two or three hours, at length, near midnight, it was announced, as if in the very words of Scripture, Behold, the bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet him. All the persons employed now lighted their lamps, and ran with them in their hands to fill up their stations in the procession; some of them had lost their lights and were unprepared, but it was then too late to seek them, and the cavalcade moved forward to the house of the bride. The bridegroom was carried in the arms of a friend, and placed on a superb seat in the midst of the company, where he sat a short time, and then went into the house, the door of which was immediately shut and guarded by Sepoys. I and others expostulated with the door-keepers, but in vain. Never was I so struck with our Lord's beautiful parable as at this moment: *And the door was shut.*"

12. *I know you not*, i. e. I acknowledge you not as belonging to my friends.

13. *Watch, therefore.* This is the important lesson and moral of the parable, and applicable to all ages. If the disciples of Jesus were to be prepared for his coming, whether his spiritual manifestation in their heart, or his external coming at the subversion of the Jewish church and state, so ought we of these latter times to be likewise watching and waiting unto prayer for his moral triumph in our souls, the growth of his kingdom among men, and the approach of that last solemn event which will be a coming of him to our spirits individually.

> "Let all your lamps be bright,
> And trim the golden flame;
> Watch! 't is your Lord's command,
> And while we speak he 's near;
> Mark the first signal of his hand,
> And ready all appear.

The last clause of this verse, *wherein the Son of Man cometh*, is probably spurious, and has therefore been rejected by most biblical critics.

14. *The kingdom of heaven is.* These words were introduced by the English translators, and have been well superseded in some versions with the clause, *The Son of Man is.— Travelling into a far country.* Or, simply journeying abroad, or into another country. — As Jesus had in the preceding parable inculcated watchfulness, in the following one, he enjoins the careful use of the smallest as well as largest gifts. — *His goods.* His money or property. Masters sometimes furnished their slaves with capital to be employed in traffic. This custom is said to be still continued in the East, and in Russia.

15. *Talents.* The talent has been

Digitized by Google

talents, to another two, and to another one ; to every man according to his several ability ; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made *them* other five talents. And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying : Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents ; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him : Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said : Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents ; behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him : Well done, good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent, came and said : Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou has not sown, and gathering

---

variously estimated from eight to fifteen hundred dollars. It stands here for an indefinitely large sum of money. — *According to his several ability.* According to each one's capacity for business. — *Took his journey.* In the original, the same verb which in its participle form is rendered in verse 14, *travelling into a far country.* Mankind are variously endowed by the Creator with more or less privileges, opportunities, and influence, according to their power of using them. None is left entirely destitute. There is no room either for pride or despair. God metes out to all an equitable lot, nor gives here too much, nor there too little.

18. *Went and digged in the earth.* Moved, it would appear, by vexation or timidity, and sloth. The useless efforts, made by the heedless and idle, often cost as much pains as would the well-directed labors of industry and business. The money was buried to prevent its being stolen. This individual represents that class which, dissatisfied with their abilities and opportunities, refuse to employ them at all to any good purpose.

21. *Well done.* The plaudit bestowed by audiences upon those they approved at the circuses or amphitheatre. — *Make thee ruler over many things,* i. e. will raise thee to higher trusts. — *Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.* Referring, as is supposed, to festive entertainments prepared for the faithful servants.

Digitized by Google

where thou hast not strawed ; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth ; lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine.
His lord answered and said unto him ; *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and
gather where I have not strawed ; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers ; and *then* at my coming
I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents.
For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance ; but from him that hath not shall be taken away
even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant

24. *An hard man.* Unfeeling, unjust. — *Reaping where thou hast not sown, &c.* Proverbial phrases, to describe a man of extortion. — *Strawed.* Strewed or scattered.

25. *I was afraid.* This is the fatal excuse upon which thousands are wrecked. They profess to be afraid, lest they should not be adequate to their obligations, and do *nothing*, lest they should not do *all*. They live like heathen, lest they should not succeed in living like Christians. Miserable timidity!

26. *Thou knewest, &c.* This sentence is better expressed in the interrogative form : Thou knewest that I was a hard man? Thou oughtest at least then to have given my money to those who would have paid for its use. The unfaithful servant was condemned out of his own mouth.

27. *To the exchangers*, i. e. to the brokers, or bankers, who exchanged money, and also received it on deposit at interest, and loaned it to others. — *Usury.* An odious sense is now attached to this word. The original simply means *interest;* without specifying that it is exorbitant or not.

29. The expressions here used are of a proverbial kind. Matt. xiii. 12. The general sense is, that those, who use well their opportunities, are favored with additional ones, while those who abuse them lose even what they have. Instead of the phrase, *that which he hath*, some authorities read, *what he seemeth to have.* The maxim here laid down is true both in temporal and spiritual affairs, not by any arbitrary decree of God, but by the natural and irresistible working of his providence. This parable suggests many valuable thoughts. 1st, That God variously endows his creatures; verse 15. Variety is the law of the universe. 2d, Those who possess much, of them more will be required. The rich, and gifted, and influential, are envied, but with how little reason! They have to render a heavier account than others ; verse 20. 3d, Nor will those, who have little, be released from their accountableness for that, because it is little. Because we can do but little good, or gain but little knowledge, or be of but little service, or make but little progress in virtue, it is no excuse, why we should fall behind in that little ; verse 24. 4th, For our acceptance with God depends, not so much on the amount we accomplish, as the degree of fidelity we manifest. Compare verses 21 and 23. 5th, It is unreasonable to complain of the Divine government. It is wickedness and

Digitized by Google

into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the 31

sloth that are the chief murmurers in this world; verse 26. 6th, There is a PROBATION, and a RETRIBUTION, and he that overlooks either, loses sight of a grand and solemn fact of his being; verses 15, 19, 23, 30. 7th, Perhaps, there is as much or more danger of neglecting or abusing the one talent, as the two, or the five; verse 18. The genius, that runs to waste in a Byron or a Bonaparte, is a meteor that startles the world with its obliquity, but how many *one talents*, how many moderate abilities, gifts, and opportunities, are squandered, unobserved, and unreproved! 8th, The gain of moral power and external privileges is in a constantly accelerating ratio, while the vicious sink at the same rapid rate; verse 29. 9th, Men are usually rewarded out of their own labors. They are paid *in kind*. They who labor for this world have this world's reward. They who labor for virtue find it to be its own exceeding great reward. Goodness and love will be rewarded with nothing less than a heaven of the same; verses 21, 22. 10th, There is a reward for virtue, and a punishment for sin,—a glorious reward, a bitter punishment. Let those who are deaf to other and higher motives to goodness, at least, obey these; verses 23, 30.

31–46. This sublime passage seems to be an expansion of chap. xvi. 27. In chap. xxiv., and thus far in xxv., the *coming* of the Son of Man has been described; but now a new topic is introduced, a description of what would take place when he *had come*. We are here favored with an account of what would occur when his kingdom had been established, and his religion had gone into operation. The judgment here described is a general one, without particular reference to time, or rather covering all time and eternity; a judgment of the souls of men, both in this and all future states. The great and all-important principle of the Divine government, which is embodied in the Christian religion, is here powerfully portrayed, in a scenic or figurative representation; viz., THAT ALL MEN WILL BE REWARDED ACCORDING TO THEIR DEEDS, WHETHER GOOD OR BAD. Men are to be judged by the laws of Christ, both in this life and the next. That judgment has already commenced, wherever the sound of the Gospel has gone. The Christian world is in a constant process of judgment before its great Master. Commencing in time, triumphant over death, this judgment will reach into eternity and last for ever; being fully perfected in that world, where the illusions of sense will vanish, and the secrets of the heart will be revealed. The question of *time*, therefore, or whether Jesus refers to one period or another, is of minor importance. For belief and for practice, the grand point to know is, that we shall be judged according to our lives, and so rewarded, either with happiness or punishment, and that the incipient retributions of the present state are prophetic of a more solemn and searching judgment in the spiritual world.

In regard to the particular form in which these principles are expressed, it is necessary to consider the peculiar circumstances of Jesus' hearers. They were Jews. They were cherishing haughty and revengeful passions. They revelled in the visions of victory over their

Digitized by Google

holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his
32 glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he
shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth
33 *his* sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his
34 right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say
unto them on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father,
inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of
35 the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat;
I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye
36 took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye
37 visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then

Roman masters and the whole Gentile world. Our Saviour most pointedly rebukes this vindictive temper. When the Messiah's throne should be erected, and not Jews alone, but all nations, should become his subjects, he would especially reward the humane and pacific, not the selfish, ambitious, and hard-hearted. The above considerations explain the prominence given in this parable, — for such it essentially is, — to the merciful and philanthropic virtues. It was not, that these were the only requirements of his kingdom, or that the happiness and misery of men here and hereafter would be adjudged solely according to their discharge of the social obligations, but that the Jews, with their brilliant temporal expectations of a conquering Messiah, were exceedingly liable to forget that Love to Man, the sentiment of Human Brotherhood, was to be one of the most glorious features of the new administration.

31. See note on Matt. xvi. 28. — *All the holy angels with him.* A figure, as some suppose, descriptive of the assistance of God's providence. — *Then*, i. e. when he had come, *then* or *thenceforward*, such and such things would take place. — *The throne of his glory.* Or, his glorious throne.

32. *All nations.* Not Jews alone would be subjects of his kingdom, but the whole world would be summoned to his judgment. — *Sheep — goats:* Moral distinctions are elsewhere imaged by these animals. Ezek. xxxiv. 17; Zech. x. 3. The use of this figurative language plainly shows, that our Lord was uttering a parable.

33. *On his right hand, &c.* Allusion is here made, perhaps, to a custom of the Sanhedrim, by which the acquitted and the condemned were thus placed respectively.

34. *Ye blessed of my Father.* A clear evidence that the Father is the original and unrivalled source of all the blessings descending through Jesus, and enjoyed under the Christian dispensation. — *Prepared for you, &c.* As Bloomfield observes, no countenance is here given to the doctrine of Absolute Decrees, or Election, or Predestination; for it is a Hebraism merely, and it is clear from the context that the true meaning is, that the kingdom of heaven was *all along* prepared for those who should approve themselves worthy of acceptance.

35, 36. *An hungered.* Hungry. — *Ye took me in.* Entertained me. — *Naked*, i. e. comparatively destitute of clothing. The characteristics of love and mercy belonging to the

Digitized by Google

shall the righteous answer him, saying: Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them: Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand: Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying: Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying: Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.

---

new dispensation are brightly depicted, because, with their existing state of feeling, the Jews, as before stated, were singularly tempted to indulge in inhuman purposes, a hostile temper, and selfish, contracted hopes. They wished for a Messiah, not so much for the benefit of the world, as for their own aggrandizement.

37. The humility of the benevolent and good is here set forth in a figurative form, as in verse 44. The presumption of the wicked is also described.

41. *Into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* A vivid Jewish figure, painting the severe punishments inflicted on the bad; the fire of remorse, and whatever other pain may be meted out to the sinner. For remarks on the word *everlasting*, see the note on the next verse.

46. *Everlasting punishment,—life eternal.* The same word in the original is here translated, in one case *everlasting*, and, in the other, *eternal*. The usual sense attributed to it is that of strictly endless duration. It is admitted, that it *may* have that meaning, but it is denied, that it *necessarily* has it. If, therefore, the doctrine of the absolute eternity of future punishment is true, this text does not absolutely prove it. For the derivation of the adjective in the Greek is from a word meaning life, age, dispensation, world, an indefinitely long period or lapse of time. The adjective itself is used many times in the Septuagint, or Greek version of the Old Testament, and applied to things of a temporary nature, or that existed only for an indefinitely long time. Gen. xvii. 8, xlviii. 4; Lev. xvi. 34; Numb. xxv. 13; Hab. iii. 6.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Anointing in the House of Simon. Institution of the Lord's Supper. Scene in the Garden of Gethsemane. Seizure of Jesus. Denial of Peter.

AND it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these say-

Whether, therefore, it signifies strictly for ever, or an indefinite period, depends upon the nature of the thing to which it is applied. When connected with God, it means literally eternal. Gen. xxi. 33. But when joined to other things, whose nature is limited, it means lasting, or long-enduring. As connected with punishment in this verse, it probably has this sense; for by punishment, we usually understand what is for the correction and benefit of the offender, and what therefore will be continued only so long, as will be for his best good. This is sometimes the case in the frail, fallible governments of men; how much greater the probability, that punishment has this reformatory character in the wise and sure-executing government of God, and that it is continued indefinitely, as the good of the transgressor requires! The above view is in harmony with the paternal attributes of God, and finds a response in our spiritual and social nature. But it is often said, the same word is used in respect to the life of the good, and is *that* to be limited? The reply is, Yes, if they cease to be good, and fall from their high estate, as most believe the angels did, who are nobler intelligences, as popularly believed, than human spirits. In other words, the wicked will be punished as long as they are wicked, and the good will be blessed as long as they are good, which, if they have overcome self and sin in this life, may be reasonably considered as identical with eternity. If man retains his free moral agency in the future life, — and if he did not, that life would be inferior to this in one of the noblest and most fearful prerogatives of our being, — he will still have a choice of good or evil, and can rise or fall. But to pursue this train of thought any farther would be to pass from the province of expository, to that of dogmatic theology.

Every human soul is judged by the Gospel of Christ, if made known to it, in this life; it shall be more searchingly judged in the life to come. Unspeakable anguish, fear, and suffering will settle down on the evil, impenitent, unreconciled spirit; but peace, blessedness, and joy will be the portion of the penitent, holy, and submissive child of God. This shall continue for an indefinitely long time, but beyond that our Lord does not carry us, leaving all in the hands of Him, who is wise, and just, and good. We need not strive to look farther into eternity, than he has given us the power of doing, but rather pause and adore before its mighty closed portals; for the glimpse he has afforded us into its awful secrets, is fitted to inspire us with longings after all that is holy and virtuous, and loathing and terror at all that is sinful; for, at all events, our present conduct, the power of habit, will send its consequences far, far onward into our future being. The Scriptures certainly represent this life, in general, as the *crisis*, which determines the future, and it is their object to awaken in us a strong and wholesome fear. They afford no encouragement for the impenitent wicked, now or ever, but every en-

Digitized by Google

ings, he said unto his disciples: Ye know that after two days 2
is *the feast of* the passover; and the Son of Man is betrayed
to be crucified.

Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, 3
and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest,
who was called Caiaphas; and consulted that they might take 4

---

couragement and hope for those who repent and reform. They teach us, that "*it is not our wisdom to speculate, but to fear.*"

If the above view should be thought to diminish the dread of transgression, and relax the bonds of virtue, the answer is, that, if true, it cannot be otherwise than the most salutary view on the whole, and in the end. And if there is danger, on one side, of representing the future state of the wicked in too mild and hopeful a light, and thus diminishing the dread of transgression, may there not be equal danger, also, on the other side, of depicting the government of Him, whom we call Father, — and surely that is no unmeaning name, — in too vivid colors of wrath, vengeance, and inexorable justice, and thus driving the timid into despair, and the bold, into a latent, or reckless infidelity?

CHAP. XXVI.

1–5. See Mark xiv. 1, 2. Luke xxii. 1, 2. The manner in which Jesus passed his days and nights at this period seems to be indicated in Luke xxi. 37, 38.

1. *All these sayings.* Referring to the discourses of the two preceding chapters. The following chapter contains the deeply interesting history of the treachery of Judas, the institution of the supper, the agony in the garden, the seizure of Jesus, his examination before Caiaphas, and the denial of Peter.

2. These two verses would be more correctly joined to chapter xxv. — *Ye know.* Or, know ye, understand ye, imperative mood. — *After two days.* Or, *within* two days. — *The feast of the passover.* This was one of the three national festivals of the Jews, held in the month of Abib, afterwards called Nisan, corresponding to our April. All the males of the nation were required to be present. It was instituted in commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt, and particularly the *passing over* of the angel of death, and the sparing of the first-born of Israel, when the first-born of the Egyptians were destroyed. Ex. xii. 27. — *Is betrayed.* Is to be delivered up. — *Crucified.* Our Lord foretells, with the utmost exactness, both the time and the method of his death, at once evincing his prophetic power, and fore-arming the minds of his disciples against this trial of their faith. Yet it seemed to all human appearance unlikely that he would thus die, for he was popular among a great portion of the people, and innocence and wisdom had apparently shielded him at every point against criminal accusations.

3. *The chief priests, &c.* Who composed, when assembled, the council called the Sanhedrim. — *The palace of the high priest.* Their proper place of meeting was a chamber belonging to the temple, but, according to the Talmud of Babylon, they ceased to hold their sessions in that place, about forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, or about the time referred to in the text. — *Caiaphas.* Josephus

Digitized by Google

5 Jesus by subtilty and kill *him*. But they said: not on the feast-*day*, lest there be an uproar among the people.

6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the

corroborates the fact here related by the Evangelist. The full name of this high priest was Caiaphas Joseph. He was appointed to the office by Valerius Gratus, who preceded Pontius Pilate as procurator of Judea, and continued in it until he was removed by Vitellius, Pilate's successor. He married the daughter of Annas or Ananus, who had also been high priest at a former period, Luke iii. 2, and who still retained the name, as he probably possessed great influence and authority, and might be the occasional substitute of his son-in-law in the official duties. The character of Caiaphas, as disclosed in the Gospels, and as intimated by Josephus, was far from honoring the priesthood.

4. *Take Jesus by subtilty and kill him.* The very deep impression, which Jesus had made upon the Jewish nation, is revealed in this fact. The most venerable men, professedly guardians of religion, meet in solemn conclave, not for the purpose of passing any order of arrest, or taking any preliminary steps for a fair trial, but to concert measures, as it would seem, to make way with their dreaded victim clandestinely, without the interveation of law, or the possibility of a rescue by the people, or, at least, to seize him, and place him in custody, at their future disposal. We here see, by their conduct, how well they deserved the terrible sentences of condemnation, uttered against them by Jesus at various times. A venerable council to behold, but full of injustice and wickedness at heart, mere whited sepulchres!

5. *Not on the feast-day:* Or rather, during the festival, which lasted eight days. — *Lest there be an uproar among the people.* Not justice, not humanity, stood as an obstacle in their way, but simply a motive of temporary expediency. Judicial proceedings, on the days of public festivals, were forbidden, and they might fear the popular resentment, if the usage was violated. Or, as is more probable, since Jesus was favored by the people, and the city was then thronged with multitudes, of whom many were his countrymen, the Galileans, they might dread an outburst of violence, if he, who had so lately been escorted into the city in triumph, should now be put to death. The popularity of Jesus resulted, in part, from his beneficent miracles, but still more, from the fond hope of the Jewish heart, that he would assume a temporal sovereignty.

6–13. See Mark xiv. 3–9, and John xii. 2–8. From the account in John, we infer that the transaction took place some time previous, and that the occasion of it, was the warm gratitude of Mary to Jesus, for raising her brother Lazarus from the dead. But Matthew and Mark relate the event, in connexion with its influence upon the plans of the Sanhedrim, and the treachery of Judas. The three accounts so nearly agree in the circumstances detailed, as to assure us, that they all refer to the same scene.

6. *Now when*, i. e. at a previous time. The passage, from the 6th to the 13th verse inclusive, may be considered as parenthetical, and explanatory of the conduct of Judas in verse 14. — *In Bethany.* The village near Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, whither Jesus often retired. As to the place, the three

Digitized by Google

leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box 7
of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head as he sat
at meat. But when his disciples saw *it*, they had indignation, 8
saying: To what purpose *is* this waste? For this ointment 9
might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When 10
Jesus understood *it*, he said unto them: Why trouble ye the
woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye 11
have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

Evangelists coincide. — *Simon the leper.* Perhaps, an individual whom Jesus had cured of that dreadful malady. John mentions that Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead, shared in the entertainment, and that Martha was in attendance.

7. *A woman.* John says that it was Mary, and that she did the act at a supper made in honor of Jesus. Simon was probably a kinsman of Lazarus and his sisters. — *An alabaster box.* A beautiful kind of soft marble, easily worked, and often made into vases and other ornamental vessels. The form of the box was probably that of a flask or cruise. — *Of very precious ointment.* Mark and John mention that it was of spikenard. The plant, from which the unguent is made, is called *nard*, and belongs to the grasses. It grows best in India, and shoots up leaves and spikes, from three to six feet high. Its aroma is so strong that the air around is perfumed with it, when the roots are crushed or bruised. The ointment was very costly. John says that there was a pound in the box, and that the odor filled the house; while Mark agrees with him, in estimating its worth, at "more than three hundred pence," or about forty dollars; a munificent testimony of her profound veneration and gratitude to Jesus. — *Poured it on his head*, i. e. probably some of it, not all. This was customary at oriental feasts. It was rather a liquid oil, than an ointment. John states that she also anointed his feet with it, and wiped them with her hair. — *As he sat at meat.* The ancient posture at table was reclining, not sitting.

8. *They had indignation.* They were very indignant. — *To what purpose is this waste?* According to John, it was Judas, who was especially displeased, though the other disciples might have shown some uneasiness, worldly-minded as they were.

9. *Sold for much.* Mark says, "for more than three hundred pence." John informs us, that it was not out of any regard for the poor that Judas said this, but because he wished to appropriate the contents to his own use, being steward of the company. We learn incidentally from this verse, that Jesus and his disciples gave alms to the poor, though destitute themselves. It is not unusual for covetousness to put on the cloak of charity. We see, in this instance, the effect of the love of money to destroy man's susceptibility of appreciating what is true and magnanimous. The avaricious often esteem that as wasted, which is given for objects of Christian philanthropy, but not so is it regarded by the Saviour of the world.

10. *Why trouble ye the woman?* It would distress her to see her warm kindness repulsed by coldness and rebukes. — *Hath wrought a good work upon me.* She has shown a generous and commendable spirit.

11. *The poor always with you.*

Digitized by Google

12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did
13 *it* for my burial. Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, *there* shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.
14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the
15 chief priests, and said *unto them*: What will ye give me, and I

You have continual opportunities to succor the poor, but the occasions of testifying your respect and gratitude to me will soon cease. We have, indeed, the poor always with us.

"'T is our great Father's plan,
That mutual wants and mutual care
May bind us, man to man."

The poor seem to be a kind of rent-receivers for the great Proprietor of all our possessions: A hundred Scripture blessings rest on his head, who is kind to the poor. But there are other great and noble objects besides mere alms-giving, appealing to the charity and generosity of the Christian world. Indeed, the best charity to the poor is to elevate their characters and enable them to help themselves.

12. *She did it for my burial.* It would be more exact to say, for my embalming. It was usual to anoint the dead, and embalm them with costly spices. The mind of Jesus was so filled with the thought of his approaching fate, that every object and scene took a hue from it. The very odor of the ointment, as it filled the house, seemed like the omen of death to his tender sensibility. He virtually said, that she might be justified in her deed, since he was so soon to die, that the perfume was as it were a preparation for his interment.

13. *For a memorial of her.* That is, for an honorable testimonial of her nobleness of character. Beautifully has the declaration been verified. Those, who performed the slightest offices for Jesus, have a name wide as the world, and lasting throughout all ages. "The odor of that ointment was not confined to that lowly Jewish dwelling. It has filled the world."

"Who shall blame the kind oblation,
Perfumes rich, profusely shed?
No! Through each remotest nation
Shall her grateful fame be spread."

"O! say what deed so lifted thy sweet name,
Mary! to that pure, silent place of fame?
One lowly offering of exceeding love."

14–20. Mark xiv. 10–17; Luke xxii. 3–14.

14. This verse may be considered as connected with the narrative of the proceedings of the Sanhedrim, vss. 3–5. The intervening passage is apparently introduced to explain the motives, which influenced Judas to betray his Master, though his name is not mentioned in the accounts of Matthew and Mark. — *Then.* About that time, referring to the meeting of the Sanhedrim in vs. 3. — *One of the twelve.* A circumstance of aggravation. — *Iscariot.* An epithet probably meaning the man of Carioth, or Kerioth.

15. *What will ye give me.* Judas was actuated, no doubt, by a variety of considerations. Impatience and curiosity to have Jesus declare himself, and a desire for the honors and rewards of a temporal kingdom, combined with the persuasion, that Jesus could, at any moment, free himself from his enemies by his miraculous power, and some minglings of resentment at his reproof, at the time of the anointing, may have entered into the web of his motives. Still the ruling evil passion, the Satan, according to the

Digitized by Google

will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportu- 16
nity to betray him.

Now the first *day* of the *feast of* unleavened bread the disci- 17
ples came to Jesus, saying unto him: Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said: Go into 18
the city to such a man, and say unto him: The Master saith:

Gospel account, was covetousness. He bargained in crime. He sold himself and his Master for money. He inquired, in the text, *how much* they would give him for his wickedness. What a contrast does his sordid treachery present to the generosity of Mary! "For covetousness aims at base and low purchases, whilst holy love is great and comprehensive as the bosom of Heaven, and aims at nothing less than infinite!"— *They covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.* Or, *paid* him that amount. The first unjust act of the Sanhedrim was to take counsel to arrest and kill Jesus by subtilty; the second, was to enter exultingly, Mark xiv. 11, into positive negotiation with an apostate disciple, for the betrayal of his Master and Friend. The sum of money was the price of a slave, Ex. xxi. 32, and would be about fifteen dollars in our currency, though the value of money was then far greater than now. "With regard to the price of his treachery, a survey of human nature and human passions will not authorize us to say that any sum is too small to tempt habitual and absorbing avarice to any act or degree of wickedness. Earthly, sensual, and contemptible, there is no knowing how low this passion will creep, nor how high it will strike."

16. *Sought.* Was seeking. He was intent upon the evil object from day to day. Luke says, it was to be accomplished in the absence of the multitude. — *To betray.* Original, *to deliver up;* without defining the quality of the act.

17. *The first day of the feast of unleavened bread.* The Jews eat that kind of bread during seven days succeeding the feast of the passover, hence, the whole festival is often called the feast of unleavened bread. The day here spoken of was Thursday, in the evening of which the passover was eaten. There is good reason for believing, that the occasion on which Jesus instituted the supper was the passover feast, and that all the Jews partook of it, on the same evening. The objection from John xviii. 28, that on the next day, Friday, the priests would not go into Pilate's judgment-hall, "lest they should be defiled, *but that they might eat the passover,*" may be easily removed. For the passover here referred to was not the paschal lamb, nor the sacrifice at the end of the first day of the passover, called Chagigah, but the feast of herbs and unleavened bread, which lasted seven days longer. The expressions in John xix. 14, 31, are also cited against the above view; but the preparation of the passover was, doubtless, as Campbell renders it, the preparation of *the Paschal Sabbath*, which was a "high day," as it occurred during the feast of unleavened bread. This is corroborated by Mark xv. 42, and John xix. 31, where the preparation is said, expressly, to relate to the Sabbath.

18. *Into the city.* They were then in Bethany. — *To such a man.* A familiar expression, to point out one

Digitized by Google

My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with
19 my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed
20 them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the
21 even was come, he sat down with the twelve. —— And as they
did eat, he said: Verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall
22 betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began

whose name is not given. The man would be met by them "bearing a pitcher of water." Mark xiv. 13. It is unnecessary to suppose, that there was any miraculous power exerted on this occasion. Jesus was probably acquainted with the man, and he takes the liberty, common during the great festivals, of requesting the use of a furnished room at his house. Accommodations for guests were furnished gratuitously at these times. Such was the hospitality of the inhabitants of the city, notwithstanding the immense multitudes which resorted thither, that, according to the Jewish writers, "a man could never say to his friend, 'I have not found a fire to roast the Passover lamb in Jerusalem,' nor 'I have not found a bed to sleep on in Jerusalem,' nor, 'the place is too strait for me to lodge in Jerusalem.'"—*My time is at hand.* Referring, probably, to the approaching termination of his ministry and life.—*I will keep the passover at thy house.* This rebuts the view entertained by some, that Jesus did not keep the passover, but only a common supper; for he would not have said this, had he foreseen that, on account of his death, he should never partake of it.

19. *The disciples*, i. e. Peter and John. Luke xxii. 8.—*They made ready the passover;* which consisted in obtaining a guest-chamber, engaging the articles of food, wine and bread, and herbs, and preparing the paschal lamb, by having it killed and dressed by the priests at the temple, and afterwards roasting it themselves.

20. *Now when the even was come.* It is natural to infer, from the close connexion of this verse with the last, that it was the passover feast, at which they now reclined, and for which they had prepared, as related in vs. 19.—*He sat down.* Original, *he reclined.* The order of events upon this interesting occasion, according to Carpenter, is as follows: "1. Introductory observations of our Lord. 2. Observations in relation to the contention of the Apostles respecting precedency. 3. Jesus washes their feet and discourses thereon. 4. He announces the treachery of Judas, after which that Apostle withdraws. 5. Declarations to the Apostles, including two announcements of Peter's denial of him. Then followed the institution of the Lord's supper."

21–25. Mark xiv. 18–21; Luke xxii. 21–23; John xiii. 21–30.

The three first items of the above order are recorded only by Luke and John, but the fourth is contained in the following paragraph.

21. *That one of you shall betray me.* This appears to have been the first intimation the disciples had, that there was treachery in their company. It is not likely that Jesus could know any more of the matter than they, except by Divine power. The object of mentioning it seems to have been to arouse the penitential emotions of Judas and turn him from his bad purpose.

22. *Exceeding sorrowful, &c.*

Digitized by Google

every one of them to say unto him: Lord, is it I? And he 23
answered and said: He that dippeth *his* hand with me in the
dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of Man goeth, as it 24
is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of
Man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not
been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and 25
said: Master, is it I? He said unto him: Thou hast said.

"When their Master declared that one of them would betray him, they did not resent the accusation, but, in the spirit of a touching self-distrust, which their experience of his better wisdom had taught them to cherish, the cry broke forth on every side, 'Lord, is it I? Is it I?' When one, whom we deeply reverence, charges us with an evil design, we suspect ourselves of it, rather than him of a wanton accusation." They were not suspicious, moreover, of one another. — *Began every one of them to say*, i. e. said.

23. *Dippeth his hand with me in the dish.* One of the dishes at the passover entertainment consisted of a species of salad, of lettuce or bitter herbs, raisins, and vinegar; emblematical, it was said, of the clay their forefathers used in making brick in Egypt. To this sauce, into which they were accustomed to dip their bread or meat as a sop, John xiii. 26, allusion is here made. Since in a company of thirteen persons, there would probably be more than one of these dishes, it has been thought that Judas reclined near Jesus, so as to dip into his dish. But he did not particularly point out Judas by this declaration, for, otherwise, it would not have been necessary to have designated him to John by a private sign; though the present verse may refer to the same transaction more fully related in John xiii. 23 – 27.

24. *Goeth.* A softened expression for *dieth*. — *As it is written of him.* As decreed in the counsels of God and revealed in the Scriptures. — *Woe unto that man.* Or, alas for that man. — *It had been good for that man, &c.* Or, according to the Improved Version, "It would have been good for him (the traitor) if that man (the Son of Man) had not been born." Without, however, resting upon this, it is plainly a proverbial and figurative expression, descriptive of a great calamity or punishment. Many phrases of the same purport are found in the Jewish writers. This is one: "He that knoweth the law and doeth it not, it were better for him that he had not come into the world." The inferences which have sometimes been drawn from a strictly literal interpretation of these words, in regard to the nature and duration of future punishment have, therefore, little pertinence or warrant.

25. The conduct of Judas is natural. Bad men are prone to assume a frankness and innocence which they do not possess, in order to avoid suspicion. — *Thou hast said.* Equivalent to Yes, or, It is. Matt. xxvi. 64, comp. with Mark xiv. 62.

26 – 29. Parallel to Mark xiv. 22 – 25, Luke xxii. 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 23 – 25. The paschal supper, from parts of which the observances of the Lord's supper seem to be derived, was celebrated, according to Olshausen, as follows: 1. A prayer from the head of the family, and a cup of wine and water distributed among the guests. 2. The lamb, with the bitter herbs, and unleavened bread, was served. The younger

Digitized by Google

26 ——And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed
it, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said: Take,
27 eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks,

members of the company were informed of the object of the ceremony, as commemorative of the departure from Egypt. The cxiii. and cxiv. Psalms were read. 3. The second cup, supposed to be mentioned in Luke xxii. 17. 4. The unleavened bread is again broken and distributed, and eaten in the sauce of herbs; this may answer to the breaking and dividing of the bread by Jesus, when he instituted the supper. 5. A third cup, called the cup of blessing, which, perhaps, corresponds to the cup taken by Jesus after the bread at the institution of the supper. Psalms cxv. to cxviii. were sung. 6. A fourth cup, and sometimes the reading of Psalms cxxvi. to cxxxvii., called the great Hallel. 7. A fifth cup closed the feast.

26. *And as they were eating*. Judas had probably withdrawn. Jesus proceeds to institute a memorial, corresponding in his religion to the paschal supper, in the Jewish system. As the one commemorated the great deliverance from Egyptian bondage, so the other was designed to celebrate the spiritual emancipation produced by the Gospel. Our Lord presides at the entertainment, as the head of a family; and, keeping the Jewish ceremony with prayer, and eating of the paschal lamb, and with the other observances of the occasion, he gracefully and spontaneously introduces a new and peculiar rite of his own. — *Jesus took bread*. This must have been the unleavened bread of the passover, formed of thin cakes, which could be readily broken. — *Blessed it*. *It* is not in the original; rather, he blessed, or gave thanks to *God*. — *Take, eat; this is my body*. The formal and solemn character of these words indicates a fixed design of establishing a new ordinance; yet, as has been said, it was originated not so much "by the understanding, as the affections of Jesus. He saw, in the broken bread and in the flowing wine, the symbols and mementos of his own body and blood. Thus hallowed by the deep sensibility of Jesus, shall they not be everlasting mementos? Shall not our hearts melt with answering tenderness? and can we disown or cancel the vows of gratitude and remembrance which Nature herself prompts?" — The Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, with its mitigated forms prevalent even in Protestant churches, arose, as Selden said, from mistaking rhetoric for logic, or, in other words, from interpreting with a prosaic literalness a bold, vivid, and almost violent metaphor. The verb *to be* is often used in the Hebrew and Syriac languages, a dialect of which Christ spoke, to convey the sense of *to signify*. Thus here: *This signifies or represents my body*. Many other cases of this idiom occur in the Scriptures. Gen. xli. 26, 27; Dan. vii. 24; Matt. xiii. 38; 1 Cor. x. 4; Rev. i. 20. It is one of the most astonishing facts of human credulity and ignorance, that the afore-mentioned doctrine, that the bread and wine of the communion are literally the body and blood of Jesus Christ, should have, for so many ages, predominated in the church.

27. *And he took the cup*. The Jews were accustomed to use wine at the passover feast. It has been common to regard this cup as answering to the third cup of the

Digitized by Google

and gave *it* to them, saying: Drink ye all of it; for this is my 28
blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink hence- 29
forth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the 30

---

passover, or the cup of Hallel, or blessing. — *Drink ye all.* Rather, *all ye;* as meaning the disciples, not the cup. It is a singular fact, that, notwithstanding this injunction was given as if prophetic of future abuses, the cup is not tendered to *all* at the Catholic communion, but it is restricted to the *clergy*. Luke and Paul add, after both the bread and the cup, these words of Jesus: "This do in remembrance of me."

28. *For this is my blood of the new testament*, i. e. this represents my blood of the new covenant, for so should the last words be rendered, signifying the new dispensation of religion, in contradistinction to the Mosaic one. As the first covenant had been sealed with blood, sprinkled by Moses upon the people, so would the second likewise be ratified, as it were, by the death of its Founder. — *Which is shed for many*, i. e. for all, not only for Jews, but for Gentiles. — *For the remission of sins.* "The Gentiles being in an uncovenanted state were regarded by the Jews as unholy, and were called sinners. See Gal. ii. 15. When, by faith in Christ, they entered into the Christian covenant, they became holy, and their sins are said to be forgiven. Thus the blood of Christ is said to have been shed "for the remission of sins." These words, in the institution of the eucharist, are only to be found in Matthew, who wrote for the Jewish believers, and would be understood by them." The blood of Christ contributes to the remission and forgiveness of sins, because it puts the seal of truth on his Gospel, and reveals the love of God for the sinner, and melts his heart to penitence by the touching appeal of a crucified Redeemer. There is remission of sins under Christianity, because the most persuasive motives are addressed to men to induce them to repent and reform, and thus fulfil the conditions *on which alone* God, under any dispensation, forgives the transgressor.

29. *Until that day when I drink it new, &c.* i. e. in a new manner, or of a new kind; meaning, either that he should not again participate in a social repast, until after his death and resurrection, when his Father's kingdom would be more fully established; or that he should not again unite with them in such an entertainment on earth, but share with them the honors and happiness of a better world, figuratively expressed by drinking wine with them. — The counsels and consolations, with the prayer, John xiv. – xvii., are supposed by Carpenter to intervene between this and the following verse.

30 – 35. See Mark xiv. 26 – 31; Luke xxii. 39, and John xviii. 1.

30. *Sung an hymn.* Or, psalm. It was customary to sing or chant psalms during the paschal supper, and at its close. The ones used were from cxiii. to cxviii. inclusive, and sometimes others also, as those from cxxvi. to cxxxvii. Jesus and his disciples chanted a Hallel, or song of praise, a fitting conclusion to the new and beautiful rite they had observed. What is translated, *sung an hymn*, is one word in the

Digitized by Google

31 Mount of Olives. Then saith Jesus unto them: All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written: "I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be
32 scattered abroad." But after I am risen again, I will go be-
33 fore you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him: Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I
34 never be offended. Jesus said unto him: Verily, I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny

---

original, which means, literally, *having hymned*. From the account above given of the Lord's supper, we infer, 1st, That it was instituted in remembrance of our Lord. 2d, That it is therefore a *means* of spiritual improvement. 3d, And also an *end*, inasmuch as it is kept for Christ's sake, to glorify him amongst men. 4th, That it is in accordance with human nature, which has ever delighted to commemorate the lives and deaths of the great and good. 5th, And that, consequently, all those, of whatever age, who feel their obligations to Jesus as their spiritual benefactor, cherish a living faith in him as the Son of God, resolve to keep his commandments, and profess his name, are entitled to a place at his table; wherever it is spread. 6th, And that the representation of the supper as an awful mystery, fencing it up in an enclosure of creeds and arbitrary rules, and observing it with an exclusive, sectarian spirit, are melancholy deviations from the affectionate simplicity of its origin. Let this feast of love be kept with the pure aim for which it was instituted, in remembrance of him who died to give us life.

31. *All ye shall be offended because of me.* Carpenter renders it, "All ye will fall away from me," i. e. they would stumble, or lose their faith in him, on account of the events soon to happen, so as to desert him. Like a wise and kind friend, he warns them of the impending difficulties.—*For it is written.* Zech. xiii. 7. The words of the old prophet were about to be verified. When the leader was seized, his followers would disperse.

32. But he would encourage their hearts by the promise of his resurrection and a future meeting with them in Galilee.—*Go before you.* The pastoral image of the preceding verse is continued in this expression. John x. 4.

33. The individuality of Peter's character is beautifully preserved, in every part of the New Testament. This resolution was a magnanimous one, but he little knew his own strength to carry it into execution, though he had been schooled by failures before. The eventual tempering and harmonizing of so impetuous a spirit was a noble trophy of the power of the Gospel.

34. The strong emphasis and climax of Jesus' reply have not escaped the critics. He told him, that verily he would not only be offended, or desert his Master, but that he would *deny* him, not only once, but *thrice*, and on *that very night*, and even before the *cock-crowing*. As cocks were not allowed in Jerusalem, it has been asserted that Peter could not have heard one. The difficulty has been removed in various ways: that the law was evaded, and that these fowls were sometimes kept in the city, as is proved

Digitized by Google

me thrice. Peter said unto him: Though I should die with 35
thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the
disciples.

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsem- 36
ane, and saith unto the disciples: Sit ye here, while I go and
pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons 37
of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then 38
saith he unto them: My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto
death; tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a 39

by a story in the Talmud, and would therefore be heard, which is the most probable view; that one might be heard, in the silent night at the house of Caiaphas near the city wall, from some neighboring village; that the phrase, *before the cock crew*, means before cock-crowing, as descriptive of a certain hour; or, that reference is made to the sounding of the trumpet at the changing of the Roman watch, which, as it took place at the times of the cock-crowing, was called by that name. There is no discrepancy between Matthew and the other Evangelists in the expression *once* and *twice;* for Matthew speaks only of the last crowing, but Mark and Luke of the first and last.

35. But the rash disciple is not convinced of his liability to fall, and only breaks forth into new protestations of fidelity. Cowper's lesson from this scene is sensible and instructive: —

"Beware of Peter's word,
Nor confidently say,
'I never will deny thee, Lord;'
But, 'Grant I never may.'"

36–46. Mark xiv. 32–42. Luke xxii. 40–46.

36. *Gethsemane.* Literally, place of oil-presses, referring to the olive oil there manufactured. It was situated across the brook Kedron from Jerusalem, under the Mount of Olives. John calls it "a garden," and we are told that Jesus "oftimes resorted thither." According to modern travellers, very aged olive trees are still standing on the ground. — *Sit ye here, &c.* He seeks retirement even from his disciples. He resorts to prayer as a relief and remedy for his overburdened spirit. All the circumstances of this scene possess a naturalness and reality, which leave upon every candid mind the liveliest conviction of the honesty and truthfulness of the history.

37. *Peter and the two sons of Zebedee*, i. e. James and John. These three were his most intimate friends, and often selected to be his confidants. — *Began to be sorrowful and very heavy.* This translation lacks the power of the original, which expresses an agony of anguish.

38. *Exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.* To explain this scene, very unreasonable suppositions have been made. 1. As that Jesus then contended with the great prince of darkness. But there is certainly no mention of it. 2. Or, that the spiritual aid from heaven, with which he had been sustained hitherto, was now withdrawn. This impeaches the goodness of God towards one whom he called beloved, in whom he was well pleased, and to whom the spirit was given not by measure or time. 3. Again, that Jesus at this crisis bore the wrath of God for the sins of mankind. But as to the former part of this idea, there is no

Digitized by Google

little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying: O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; never-
40 theless, not as I will, but as thou *wilt*. And he cometh unto

evidence that he was suffering under the anger of the Deity, for we are told, in John x. 17, that his Father loved him because he laid down his life; and an angel or spiritual influence from on high strengthened him in the dark hour. Luke xxii. 43. As to the notion that he was now suffering vicariously for man, or instead of man, like Atlas, under the weight of an incumbent world of sin, there is not a single word of it whispered in any of the narrations, and it is to be regarded as a far-fetched and groundless conjecture. The plain and scriptural view is, that the agony of Jesus was not supernatural, but that it was similar to what martyrs have endured, and greater only as his sensibility was more tender, his destitution of sympathy greater, and the cause for which he was about to suffer immeasurably more important. He was a man of sorrows, exposed to a combination of evils. The clearly-seen horrors of his approaching crucifixion, with all the aggravating circumstances of the treachery, desertion, and denial of his disciples, the wickedness of his enemies, and the deadness of the world, in which he stood solitary, and without sympathy as to his plan of spiritual salvation, were sufficient, for the time, to cloud and greatly distress his mind. His previous references to his dreadful death, Matt. xvi. 23, xx. 22; Luke xii. 49, 50, his pain at the baseness of Judas, verse 22, John xiii. 21, and his direct mention of the cup of suffering which he must soon drink to the dregs, verses 39, 42, reveal not ambiguously the cause of his anguish. His distress was great in proportion to the refinement of his character, his exact foresight of his dreadful sufferings, his consciousness of being misunderstood and wronged by men, and his knowledge of the sea of woes that was rushing on his beloved country for their rejection of the true Messiah. The picture is heightened by Luke, xxii. 44; though it is not probably meant that he sweat blood, but sweat as freely as if bleeding. — *Tarry ye here, and watch with me.* Jesus in his distress and forebodings is strengthened, as the afflicted always are, by the presence of his dearest friends. Blind and unsympathizing as they were, he leaned on them, since the strong in their despairing hours find comfort even in the weak. It was night too, when loneliness is most felt, and fear puts on its most portentous shapes, and the rustling of a leaf terrifies the bold heart.

39. *A little farther.* Luke says, "a stone's cast," or throw. He would pour out his heart alone. — *Fell on his face.* What intensity of feeling and earnestness of supplication are here depicted! The Saviour prostrate on his face in prayer! — *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me, &c. Cup* was often used to express one's lot, or calamities. Mark says, "*the hour*," xiv. 35. Jesus was no stoic or fakir. He prayed, with human feelings, to be delivered from the grim and hideous fate before him, if compatible with the purposes of God; but if not, that he might be totally resigned, and identify his will with his Father's. He would have preferred that it should be otherwise, if possible; but, as it was, he would resolve his preference into the Divine pleasure. Is not this the very essence of submission and obedience? not

Digitized by Google

the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter: What! could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and 41
pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the sec- 42
ond time, and prayed, saying: O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again (for their eyes were 43
heavy); and he left them, and went away again, and prayed 44
the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his 45
disciples, and saith unto them: Sleep on now, and take *your*

---

compliance, where there is no opposition, but a deliberate, unreserved yielding of one's own will to the better will of God! "Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things he suffered."

40. *Asleep.* We are to remember that it was now the dead of night, that they were worn out with fatigue and excitement, and that even their grief and distress had a natural tendency to make them sleep, as is proved by many medical authorities. So Luke, who has been supposed to have been a physician, says, with wonderful reality, that they were "sleeping *for sorrow.*" — *Saith unto Peter.* Because he had been the most vehement in his declarations of attachment. The question is imbued with a mournful sensibility.

41. *Watch and pray.* Good advice at all times, especially applicable when danger and temptation the most overwhelming were at hand. — *That ye enter not into temptation*, i. e. so as to be overcome by it. — *The spirit indeed is willing, &c.* This remark shows the kind construction Jesus put upon their conduct. Whilst he admonished them to be on their guard, he apologized for their indifference to his sorrows, in words apparently suggested by his own conflict with trial and temptation.

42–44. It is evident from the history that it was the apprehension of something future, not a present evil, as popularly believed, not the burden of the world's sins, which weighed down his spirits. He was suffering prospectively. The anguish of his soul is affectingly laid open in this scene, where "he turned repeatedly from man to God, from heaven to earth, seeking some relief, some support, amidst the horrors that environed him, and for a while seeking it in vain." — The example of Jesus on this occasion is admirably suited to the wants of weak and sorrowing humanity. He encased himself in no stoical indifference. He treated the evils of life as evils. He showed that the highest excellence consists, not in an insensibility to sorrow, but in adhering to duty in spite of it. "He sanctified the passion of fear, and hallowed natural sadness, that we might not think the infelicities of our nature and the calamities of our temporal condition to become criminal, so long as they make us not to omit a duty." To the tempted, despairing, and suffering, his conduct affords the happiest encouragements. See Heb. ii. 10, 18, iv. 15, v. 2, 8, in some of which passages his trials are represented as having a beneficial effect also upon his own character.

45. *Sleep on now, and take your rest.* A clearer sense is given by

Digitized by Google

rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is
46 betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going;
behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.
47 And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came,
and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from
48 the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that be-
trayed him gave them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall
49 kiss, that same is he; hold him fast. And forthwith he came
50 to Jesus, and said: Hail, Master; and kissed him. And
Jesus said unto him: Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then
51 came they and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. —— And,
behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his*
hand, and drew his sword; and struck a servant of the high

---

putting it into an interrogatory form. Are you still sleeping and resting, even in this hour of peril? — *Behold, the hour is at hand, &c.* Lo, the moment has arrived, when I shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners, i. e. be delivered to the power of the Gentiles, who are called sinners indiscriminately.

46. *Rise, let us be going.* As if filled with perfect courage, and impatient of any longer suspense, he would even go to meet his approaching enemies. This whole narration is stamped with indescribable naturalness and reality.

47–56. Compare Mark xiv. 43–52; Luke xxii. 47–53; John xviii. 2–12. Carpenter here makes an important remark, applicable also to other parts of the history: "The agitating and hurried nature of the occurrences is impressed in the characters of reality on the different records. We need only to realize them to our conceptions, to perceive how all might take place, and yet be only partially seen by different witnesses."

47. *One of the twelve.* A circumstance which enhanced his guilt. — *A great multitude.* John says, "a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees." It was probably a miscellaneous collection, part soldiers, and part servants, headed by Judas, but under the command of Roman officers and Jewish priests. Luke xxii. 52. — *Staves.* Clubs.

48, 49. As Jesus was personally unknown to the men, or could with difficulty be recognised in the night, if known, the traitor points him out by the usual mode of salutation among friends in the east, thus aggravating his treachery with hypocrisy.

50. *Friend.* Rather, companion or associate, for no particular attachment is necessarily implied in the original. — *Laid hands on Jesus, and took him.* Dupin has shown conclusively, in his able work on the Trial of Jesus, that he was seized illegally, or without any judicial order for his arrest.

51. *One of them*, i. e. Peter, ever the most forward to speak and act. He had that rash valor, which, in the moment of danger, led him to fight for his Master; but he was wanting in that calmer and loftier moral courage, which would sustain him in the palace of the high priest, and enable him to confess his Mas-

Digitized by Google

priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him : 52
Put up again thy sword into his place : for all they that take
the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I 53
cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me
more than twelve legions of angels ? But how then shall the 54
Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ? —— In that same 55
hour said Jesus to the multitudes : Are ye come out as against
a thief, with swords and staves, for to take me ? I sat daily
with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me ;
but all this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets 56
might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

---

ter, in the face of his triumphant enemies. — *A servant*. John calls him Malchus. It had been already mentioned by Luke, xxii. 38, that there were two swords among the disciples. These were rather knives, or cutlasses, than long weapons, and, perhaps, were used to defend them against robbers in their travels. Luke informs us, that Jesus, with a divine compassion towards his enemy, healed the wound by his miraculous power.

52. Our Saviour, after the agony in the garden of Gethsemane, appears to have entirely recovered his fortitude and self-possession. He rebukes his treacherous disciple, heals his wounded foe, restrains the impetuous Peter, and remonstrates against the priests and captains. — *His*. Old English for *its*. — *They that take the sword, &c.* A proverbial expression, that those who resorted to violence would be likely to perish by violence. The sword devours those who resort to its arbitration. The history of the whole world is but a comment upon this text.

53, 54. *Now*. Even at this crisis of danger. — *Twelve legions of angels*. Spoken, perhaps, in allusion to his twelve Apostles. The Roman legion consisted, at this period of the empire, of about 6000 men. The sense is, an indefinitely large number. If resistance were my duty, should I not be aided, not merely by these few disciples, but by the armies of God ? At my supplication, would not the arm of infinite power be stretched out in my defence ? This showed that the self-sacrifice of Jesus was voluntary. He laid down his life of his own accord. He says, that only by submitting to his fate, would the great purposes of his religion be fulfilled. The Scriptures, in their intimations of a suffering Messiah, and the love and self-sacrifice, which were to prevail under his reign, were thus to be accomplished. It is usual to refer to Is. liii. in this connexion. Nothing could better quiet the consternation of the disciples, than to inform them that the divine predictions of old were now to receive their fulfilment.

55. *In that same hour*. Or, at that time. — *A thief*. Rather, a robber, a desperate character, against whom force was necessary. Jesus expostulates with the crowd, because they had listened peacefully to his instructions in the temple, but had now rushed out with weapons of violence to seize him, as if he were a man of blood.

56. *The Scriptures of the prophets*, i. e. the writings of the prophets. See note on verse 54. — *Then all the disciples, &c.* There is a sad em-

Digitized by Google

57 And they that had laid hold on Jesus led *him* away to Caia-
phas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were
58 assembled. But Peter followed him afar off, unto the high
priest's palace; and went in, and sat with the servants to see
59 the end. Now the chief priests and elders, and all the council,
60 sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death. But
found none; yea, though many false witnesses came, *yet* found
61 they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said:
This *fellow* said: I am able to destroy the temple of God, and

---

phasis on the word *all* in this clause. Even the daring of Peter and the affection of John gave way at this exigency. They had perhaps supposed that Jesus would exert his miraculous power in self-defence. But when they see him, in the hands of his enemies, an unresisting victim, they flee panic-struck.

57–68. Mark xiv. 53–65; Luke xxii. 54, 55, 63–65; John xviii. 13–24.

57. John, xviii. 13, informs us that Jesus was first led to the house of Annas, who had, formerly, been high priest. This might be done as a mark of honor, or to gratify his curiosity. He was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was then acting high priest, or, as John says, "high priest that same year;" for at that period the office frequently changed hands. — *The scribes and the elders.* The Jewish Sanhedrim met at the house of Caiaphas. Their malignity against Jesus was manifested by their being assembled in the night, contrary to law, to try him, probably in order to guard against a popular tumult, and to forward the matter so far, as to turn the enthusiasm of the people against him, on the morrow.

58. *The high priest's palace.* Or, hall or court, which was open above. — *Servants*, i. e. the inferior officers attendant upon the occasion. The other Evangelists add, that Peter warmed himself with them at a fire they had kindled, for the night air in Judea is cold at that season of the year. The same vehemence of character, which had often before exposed the Apostle to temptation, now led him, unprepared, into the midst of danger. The very uneasiness of such a mind would naturally betray itself, while the calmer, but more feeling John, escaped unobserved.

59. *All the council.* The whole Sanhedrim had prejudged the case, and wished not for a fair trial, but for sentence of death against the prisoner. Such were the hands, that held the scales of justice among God's chosen people! — *Sought false witness.* They would have preferred true testimony, of course, if it was to be found, and would be equally favorable to their wishes; but, otherwise, they were ready to resort to false evidence. — John relates more particularly the words, which passed between the high priest and Jesus, previously to the calling of witnesses, and the indignities which Jesus suffered. John xviii. 19–23.

60. *Found none*, i. e. no testimony of any sort which was to their purpose. Mark says, "their witness agreed not together."

61. *Fellow.* This is a needless and inappropriate addition of the translators. — *I am able to destroy the temple of God.* They put a false construction upon, and misquoted, language which Jesus had actually

Digitized by Google

to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said 62
unto him: Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these
witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the 63
high priest answered and said unto him: I adjure thee, by
the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ,
the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him: Thou hast said. Nev- 64
ertheless, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of
Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the

---

used, John ii. 19, in reference to the destruction of his body, and its resurrection from the dead, after three days. They so perverted his declaration as to involve him in a crime of speaking blasphemy against the holy temple. But, as Mark, xiv. 59, states, their testimony was still contradictory and inconclusive.

62. It would appear, notwithstanding the opposite opinion of some critics, that the Sanhedrim was now in session, and that the high priest was presiding as usual, over it. — *Answerest thou nothing?* It seems to have been his aim to extort a reply, and to find matter of accusation in it against Jesus. — *What is it which these witness against thee?* How great a crime are you charged with in their evidence! It is observable, that the high priest had arisen from his seat, in his state of excitement, and was now seemingly trying by threatening words to overawe his prisoner.

63. But Jesus maintains a dignified silence, as to the charges, and gives his reasons, Luke xxii. 67, 68, why he did not reply. He saw the futility of their charges, and the craft of the high priest to torture his words into proofs against him. But the ground is now changed; we hear no more of blasphemy against the temple. Nothing could be made of the false and contradictory witnesses. — *I adjure thee, &c.* Unable to effect their guilty purpose by the testimony of others, they now resort to the most illegal method of compelling the prisoner to criminate himself. The high priest in the Jewish form administers an oath to which there was no innocent alternative, but to answer. Lev. v. 1. — *The Christ, the Son of God.* In other words, Art thou the Messiah? As Dupin has remarked, the adjuration of the high priest was a gross infraction of that rule of morals and jurisprudence which forbids our placing an accused person between the danger of perjury and the fear of inculpating himself, and thus making his situation more hazardous.

64. *Thou hast said,* i. e. *I am* the Messiah, Mark xiv. 62. Jesus felt under obligation, when put under oath, to answer the high priest, and he could only answer in the affirmative, be the consequences what they would. His declaration was important, as he had forborne hitherto to declare himself the Messiah. But now, before the highest assembly of his nation, under oath, and in the most public and solemn manner, he asserts his great office. He puts his foes into the dilemma of freeing him, or condemning one, whom they now know to be the Messiah. — *Nevertheless.* Or, moreover, in addition. — *Hereafter.* Better, henceforth. — *The Son of Man, &c.* This language was used of the Messiah, Dan. vii. 13, 14, to describe his conspicuous, powerful coming. — *The right hand of power.*

Digitized by Google

65 clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying: He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.
66 What think ye? They answered and said: He is guilty of
67 death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and
68 others smote *him* with the palms of their hands, saying: Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?

Luke xxii. 69. Literally, the right hand of *the* power, i. e. of the Almighty. Clothed with Divine authority. They had been asking for signs from heaven. They would soon, either at the crucifixion or at the destruction of Jerusalem, be furnished with such powerful and ocular proofs of his Messiahship, as might be likened to his coming visibly in the clouds of heaven, invested with a divine majesty and glory. Prisoner as he was, Jesus rises at this time into the grandeur of his office, and awes them by the sublimity of his prophecies.

65. *Rent his clothes.* This was done with affected horror at Jesus' assertion of his high authority. The customs of the east tolerate more violent expressions of feeling, than are usual among us. Explicit prohibitions were made in the Mosaic law, Lev. x. 6, xxi. 10, that the priests should not rend their garments upon funeral occasions. Frequent allusions are found, both in the Classics and the Scriptures, to this singular usage. Gen. xxxvii. 29, 34; 2 Kings xviii. 37, xix. 1; Job i. 20; Acts xiv. 14. — *Blasphemy.* As that he had spoken against God by claiming to be the Messiah, his Son. It was not that he had claimed to be God, or equal to God, for this he never did. — *Ye have heard, &c.* There was no further occasion for witnesses, for they had predetermined to condemn Jesus, guilty or not guilty. They wrested what had been illegally extorted from him by an oath into grounds of condemnation. In truth, the whole scene before the Sanhedrim was an absolute mockery of justice.

66. *He is guilty of death.* Deserves to die. The council but too much resembled their president, in their injustice and fury against Jesus. So overwhelming was the popular feeling, that not one appears to have dared to lift his voice in behalf of the innocent and grossly injured prisoner, though we have reason to believe that at least Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus disapproved of such proceedings. Luke xxiii. 51; John xix. 39. The Sanhedrim could not, however, execute their sentence, for the Romans had reserved in their hands the power of life and death.

67, 68. *Spit in his face.* An act of the grossest abuse. Job xxx. 10; Isa. l. 6. — *Buffeted.* Good grammar requires *buffet*, i. e. struck with the fist, inflicting heavy blows, such as would cause bruises and pain. — *Palms of their hands.* Rods, according to some. — *Prophesy unto us, thou Christ.* This they said in derision of his pretensions to the office of prophet and Messiah. Mark states, that they had blindfolded him, and then required him to designate who struck him. What a hideous picture is here drawn of the highest Jewish tribunal, that would allow such outrages upon a prisoner, who had not been so much as legally convicted or sentenced!

Digitized by Google

Now Peter sat without in the palace. And a damsel came 69
unto him, saying: Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But 70
he denied before *them* all, saying: I know not what thou sayest.
And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, 71
and said unto them that were there: This *fellow* was also with

---

When, too, we consider the spotless conduct of Jesus, his truth, benevolence, meekness, Divine origin and office, where shall we find words to describe the abominations of the Sanhedrim? When the first court of the nation had fallen to this depth of brutality and injustice, it was time for the avenger to come. The lying, apostate race were no longer to affront Heaven with their hypocrisy. The Roman eagle already scented his prey, and spread his wings for Judea and for Jerusalem.

69–75. Parallel to Mark xiv. 66–72; Luke xxii. 56–62; John xviii. 17, 25–27. There are some slight variations in the history of Peter's denial, but they serve to confirm rather than to shake either the veracity of the writers or the genuineness of their record. The tumult of the scene would naturally lead to discrepancy in the accounts.

69. *Without in the palace.* Or, as Mark writes, "*beneath* in the palace." The place where the Sanhedrim met was elevated above the rest of the hall or court. Peter appears to have been in the lower part of the court among the attendants and officers, near the fire of coals. — *A damsel came unto him*, i. e. a maid-servant, probably a door-keeper, for females discharged that office among the Jews. The uneasy and distressed manner of one, so vehement in his feelings as Peter, would naturally cause him to be noticed. — *Thou also.* In reference, perhaps, to John's being known as a disciple. — *Wast with Jesus of Galilee*, i. e. of his party, or on his side. He was designated as belonging to Galilee, because he was of Nazareth, and to distinguish him from others of the same name. It was a generous act for Peter thus to follow his Master into the midst of danger, but he was too confident of his own strength to realize his peril, and to be prepared by watching and prayer to overcome temptation. It is our duty to shun danger, when possible, and, when we cannot do that innocently, to put on the whole armor of God, and commend ourselves to his Divine aid, who is ever near and ready to assist his exposed children, and who "will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it."

70. *I know not what thou sayest.* There is great naturalness in these words; such is the manner of persons accused. He feigns to be ignorant of the whole matter. He professes not to know what the question referred to. What a stroke of reality! Can any one believe that the book, which is inscribed everywhere with such luminous marks of truth, could ever have been the work of deceivers or deceived? Our faith in the Scriptures and their important contents will be immensely strengthened, if in reading them we trace these countless evidences of veracity and honesty. After this first denial, Mark states that the cock crew, or, as some with less reason suppose, the trumpet of the Roman watch now sounded, at the hour of midnight, which would bring the first denial to the time when Peter first came in.

71. *And when he was gone out in-*

Digitized by Google

72 Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath: I do
73 not know the man. And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by, and said to Peter: Surely thou also art *one* of them;
74 for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying:* I know not the man. And immediately the
75 cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him: Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly.

---

to the porch. Frightened at what had happened, it appears that he was about to withdraw himself from the place. But his movements were watched, and, as he goes out into the porch or entry, he encounters another servant, who repeats the same charge. Even a woman's voice is able to terrify him, who a short time before had said, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee."

72. *Denied with an oath.* This was a new step in his guilt. He denies under the solemnity of an oath. When the limit of virtue is once broken over, it is easier and easier to wander on into forbidden paths. "Resist the beginnings" is a rule of the first importance to the moral character.

73. *Thy speech bewrayeth thee,* i. e. pointed him out as a Galilean, for we are told, that the people of that province spoke in a peculiar dialect and brogue, which was considered barbarous by the rest of the Jews. This was occasioned by the admixture of foreigners with the native inhabitants. See note on Matt. xv. 29. The very eagerness of his asseverations to the contrary only proved more conclusively, by his native accent, the truth of their charge. — *Bewrayeth* is an obsolete word, meaning betrayeth. The treatment Jesus was receiving from his brutal foes, perhaps, shook Peter's faith in his Messiahship. It occurred to him that the blow he had inflicted on Malchus might be brought up against him. In a moment of doubt and fear, he fell.

74. *To curse and to swear.* He sinks deeper from step to step. He imprecates curses upon himself, denying that he knew Jesus. Let me perish if I am acquainted with this man. — *The cock crew.* See note on verse 34. It is supposed to have been now about three o'clock, or at the dawn of day.

75. *Remembered the word of Jesus,* verse 34. Luke says, that "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." Though at a distance from him, Jesus' look recalled him to himself. "Those eyes, through which beamed the most generous spirit that ever dwelt in a human bosom, were turned full, in all their awful clearness and serenity, upon the apostate disciple, and they dissolved his heart in the tears of an agonizing repentance." — *And he went out and wept bitterly.* "If that look taught Peter to repent, it may teach us to believe. The fraud and the folly which we witness have no such singleness of heart and such plain majesty of action. Wherever we behold such signs as these, we hail them as the marks which God has put upon truth and good faith; premeditated sophistry may destroy the first burst of nature, but in reading the history of Christ's death, the fresh and sudden feelings of the heart all acquit him, all praise him, all believe in him."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus.

WHEN the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus, to put him to death. And when they had bound him, they led *him* away, 2 and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

---

1. We learn from this account the strict honesty and candor of the Evangelists, all four of whom have, without exculpation, related the sad history of the fall of the chief Apostle, the Rock of the Church. How beautiful is the simple and severe truth, though it makes against ourselves!

2. We see the folly of self-confidence, and man's liability to fall at his most unguarded moment. We may practically deny our Saviour now, by abjuring the principles of his religion. To watch and pray is our only safe or reasonable course.

3. In the mildness with which Jesus treated his fallen disciple, we witness the power of love, and discern an image of God's forgiveness of his penitent children.

4. In the quick sorrow of Peter, we behold the true heart of faith still remaining, "a repentance to salvation, not to be repented of," and his tears are

> "Like blessed showers,
> Which leave the skies they come from bright and holy."

CHAP. XXVII.

1–2. See Mark xv. 1; Luke xxiii. 1; John xviii. 28.

1. *When the morning was come.* Their proceedings thus far had been in the night, which was contrary to their laws. Their hostility to Jesus broke through every restraint of custom and justice. — *Took counsel — to put him to death.* They had already condemned Jesus to death, but the power to execute their unrighteous decision did not come within their jurisdiction. For the Romans were masters, and they had reserved in their own hands the power of life and death. The next step for the enemies of Jesus to take was, therefore, to carry him before the Roman tribunal, and procure, through Gentile aid, the execution of their sentence against their Messiah. The *counsel* spoken of in the text was the concerting of measures to effect this object.

2. *Bound him.* While before the council, the bonds, with which they had bound him at his arrest, were, probably, taken off, but now put on again, as he is conducted to another part of the city. This is termed by Dupin, a criminal degree of rigor. — *To Pontius Pilate the governor.* During the great festivals, it was customary for this officer to be at Jerusalem, though his proper residence was at Cæsarea. The title of president or governor properly belonged to the chief officer of Syria, under which province Judea was then included as one of its dependences; though the procurator of Judea exercised some of the prerogatives of that office, as in capital cases, and was, therefore, sometimes called governor, as in the text, or vice-governor. Pilate, the fifth incumbent of this post, was appointed A. D. 26 or 27, and continued about ten years. His government was very unpopular with the Jews, as he acted in ignorance, or in contempt,

Digitized by Google

3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he
was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty
4 pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying: I have
sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they
5 said: What *is that* to us? see thou *to that*. And he cast down

---

of the feelings of the people whom he ruled. Repeated difficulties and rebellions arose. He was, finally, superseded and summoned to Rome to account for his conduct. Accused and convicted of mal-administration, he was banished to Vienne, in Gaul, where, in a fit of remorse and despair, it is reported, that he put an end to his life, two years after. John, xviii. 28, relates, in this connexion, a fact, which reveals the deep hypocrisy of the priests and Scribes, who were scrupulous of external observances at the moment they were trampling justice and mercy in the dust.

3. *Saw that he was condemned*, i. e. by the Jewish Sanhedrim. A key is here given to the state of Judas' mind. He had betrayed his Master, expecting, that, as he had miraculous power, he would free himself, and vindicate his dignity as King of the Jews. But when he beholds him an unresisting prisoner, a capital sentence pronounced against him, and matters hastening to extremity, he is seized with grief and despair. Avaricious as he is, he forgets his love of money in this new and overwhelming emotion; he casts the silver from him as accursed, for he sees it already, in imagination, red with the blood of his Master, his innocent Master. — *Repented himself*. Was sorry, but his sorrow was that of the world, dark and despairing, not the filial, hopeful penitence of a child of God. See 2 Cor. vii. 10. It should be remarked, that the account of Judas' tragic fate, from the third to the tenth verse inclusive, is a digression, or parenthetical passage. — *Thirty pieces of silver*. See note on chap. xxvi. 15.

4. *The innocent blood*. In the original no article is used. A Hebraism for an innocent person. Judas confesses his great sin before those, who had instigated him to its commission. His testimony to the innocence of our Master is invaluable; because he had long been one of his intimate associates and privy to his daily life and conversation, and if any thing wrong, or of a criminal nature, could have been wrung from the past, now was the time, when it was likely to be done, to justify his baseness in his own eyes and those of others. But no. As he surveyed the life and character of his injured Master, only images of his purity and goodness, only recollections of his beneficent miracles and his divine instructions, rose to view, and served but to drive the iron of remorse still deeper into his soul — *See thou to that*. Or, according to a common phrase, that is your concern. With a frigid indifference, and even a taunting disclaimer of any participation in his crime, the priests and elders answer the poor wretch, whom they had made the tool of their abominable purposes. "So all wicked men, who make use of the agency of others for the accomplishment of crime, or the gratification of their passions, care little for the effect produced on the instruments they employ. They soon cast them off and despise them; and in thousands of instances the agents of villany, and the panders to the pleasures of others, are

Digitized by Google

the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed; and went and hanged himself. —— And the chief priests took the silver 6
pieces, and said: It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took 7
counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called the field of 8

coldly abandoned to remorse, wretchedness, crime, and death," when the purpose, for which they were enlisted, has been compassed.

5. *Cast down the pieces of silver.* The identical money, that had a short time before glittered so temptingly in his eye, had now become so many bright witnesses to flash upon him his dreadful offence. He can no longer carry it with him. It weighs him down as an intolerable burden. — *Hanged himself.* Matthew here describes the suicidal act of Judas, while Peter, in Acts i. 18, gives additional particulars, by which it would appear, that the cord or rope by which he was suspended gave way, and that he was precipitated down a steep place, probably the height on which the temple was built, and dashed in pieces; so that, in reality, there is no serious discrepancy, but rather a reciprocal confirmation of the account. We are here taught an impressive lesson, the tremendous power of a condemning conscience, and the liability of the deeply wicked to be driven into a desperate remorse, rather than an humble penitence. We are warned, too, of the insidious nature of sin and its progressive tendency. It appears, that Judas had been gradually yielding to the pressure of temptation, and committing small acts of wrong, during his office as treasurer to the little fraternity. John xii. 6. Let us learn that there is no moral safety, but in absolute compliance with conscience.

"Its slighted touches instant pause, —
Debar a' side pretences,
And resolutely keep its laws,
Uncaring consequences."

6. *It is not lawful.* A scrupulousness becoming these hypocrites. They fear to violate ceremonial requisitions, Deut. xxiii. 18, but express no compunction at receiving the silver, with which they had paid the traitor for delivering up his guileless master. — *Treasury.* This was a part of the temple in the court of the women, where the offerings made to God were kept. — *The price of blood*, i. e. of life. It was money by which the life of Jesus had been bartered away.

7. *Bought with them the potter's field.* In Acts i. 18, we are told that *Judas* purchased a field. The variance is easily reconciled. He might be properly said to purchase it, inasmuch as he was the cause or occasion of its being purchased, though others actually executed the bargain after his death. It would be unnecessary to mention these things, had not the ingenuity of skepticism fastened on the minutest objections, arising from differences in the sacred narratives, to promote its bad cause. The potter's field was, probably, some well known field, or plat of ground, where earthern wares had been manufactured, but which had now become comparatively useless. — *To bury strangers in*, i. e. foreign Jews, who had come from distant parts, and died at Jerusalem during the feasts, or, as Bloomfield contends, Gentile foreigners.

Digitized by Google

9 blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was
spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying: "And they took the
thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom
10 they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the
potter's field; as the Lord appointed me."
11 And Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor
asked him, saying: Art thou the king of the Jews? And Jesus

8. *The field of blood.* Called, in Acts i. 19, *Aceldama*, by the Jews, which signified, in the dialect then used, the field of blood.

9, 10. *Then was fulfilled*, i. e. the words of the old prophet might be applied with propriety to the present transaction. We cannot suppose that there was any exact fulfilment of prophecy in this case. — *Jeremy the prophet.* It has been conjectured, that an incorrect quotation is made here from Jeremiah xxxii. 9 – 11. But the common and more probable opinion is, that Zech. xi. 12, 13 is intended, though there is considerable difference of language and ideas. A difficulty, however, arises, for Jeremiah is expressly mentioned, as the author of the quotation. To obviate this, various conjectures have been made. Some have asserted, that Jeremiah wrote some of the chapters, including the text, which go by the name of Zechariah. Lightfoot advocates the view, that the Hebrew Scriptures were divided into three parts, the Law, the Psalms, and Jeremiah, which last included the writings of the prophets; and that Matthew quotes, under the name of him who stood first in the volume, the language, which was, in fact, written by another hand. But the exactness, with which other quotations in the Gospels are referred to their several authors, rebuts this theory. Again, some critics believe the writer to have made a mistake as to the name. But, perhaps, the most probable view is that Matthew simply wrote *the prophet*, and that the addition of Jeremiah was the blunder of an early copyist, for some early manuscripts and the Syriac version omit it.

11 – 31. Mark xv. 2 – 20; Luke xxiii. 2 – 25; John xviii. 28 – 40. xix. 1 – 16.

11. The narrative dropped at verse 2 is here resumed. John, xviii. 28 – 32, gives a particular account of the introductory interview between the priests and Pilate. It appears, that they wished to have him execute their sentence of death against Jesus, without any further inquiry into the merits of the case. But they were obliged to allow him to investigate the whole matter himself. Yet knowing that the charge of blasphemy, upon which they had sentenced him, would not avail before a Gentile magistrate, they artfully change the ground of attack, and accuse Jesus of a political offence against the authority of Rome, Luke xxiii. 2, which involved them in the guilt of a downright falsehood. The trial, if such it may be called, laying aside its religious, and assuming a political aspect, must now be attended to, by one jealous of the interests of Rome. We suppose it to be at this point of time, that Matthew introduces Pilate saying, in the words of this verse, Art thou the King of the Jews? Or, to give it a form that expresses surprise as well as inquiry, Thou art the King of the Jews? *Thou*, so humble and meek a person? The question of Pilate appears to refer

Digitized by Google

said unto him: Thou sayest. And when he was accused of 12
the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said 13
Pilate unto him: Hearest thou not how many things they wit-
ness against thee? And he answered him to never a word; 14
insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly. Now at *that* 15
feast, the governor was wont to release unto the people a pris-
oner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, 16
called Barabbas. Therefore, when they were gathered to- 17

---

to the accusation in Luke xxiii. 2, that Jesus called himself Christ, a king; which, to Pilate's mind, would convey no idea but that of political assumption. — *Thou sayest*, i. e. I am. 1 Tim. vi. 13. But Jesus explains, John xix. 36, 37, that his kingdom was a spiritual and not a temporal one, and that, therefore, the Romans had nothing to fear from him. This satisfied Pilate, and he goes out to the Jews and tells them, Luke xxiii. 4, John xviii. 38, that he found the prisoner entirely innocent; a memorable declaration, from which he did not recede, though at last he inconsistently sentenced him to be crucified.

12–14. Upon this it appears that his accusers became more urgent, fearing probably that he might escape their malice. They related how he had agitated the people through the whole country, from Galilee to Jerusalem. Luke xxiii. 5. When the ear of Pilate caught the word *Galilee*, he instantly bethought himself of sending the perplexing case to Herod, who held jurisdiction over Galilee, and was then, fortunately, in the city. Luke xxiii. 7–12. Pilate was evidently glad to shift off his responsibility upon another person, but the plan wholly failed in the end. — *To never a word.* Not even a single word; he answered nothing. Having declared himself to Pilate, he would not wrangle with those, who, in their rage, were incapable of appreciating any defence or explanation he might offer. Silence, under such circumstances, was the manly course, and testified to his innocence more powerfully than words. This was such unusual conduct on the part of a prisoner, and such was, no doubt, the calm majesty of Jesus, that Pilate was struck with wonder.

15. Herod was gratified with the opportunity he had long desired, of seeing Jesus, but, after questioning him in vain, he treated the whole affair with ridicule, rather than as deserving any serious thought. Arraying Jesus in mock dignity, he remanded him to Pilate, with whom, from that time, he became reconciled. Luke xxiii. 7–12. — *At that feast*, i. e. the passover. — *The governor was wont to release, &c.* Had been accustomed to release. This was, perhaps, partly done to conciliate and soothe the Jews in their subjection. Similar customs have prevailed, both in ancient and modern nations. Days of festivity and national joy have been celebrated, by the pardon of crimes and the release of prisoners. Pilate seemed resolved to use every expedient to release Jesus without giving popular offence.

16. *A notable prisoner*, i. e. notorious or infamous. For, according to Mark and Luke, he had been imprisoned for sedition and murder in a late insurrection. — *Barabbas.* The most ancient authorities are said to

Digitized by Google

gether, Pilate said unto them: Whom will ye that I release
18 unto you? Barabbas? or Jesus, which is called Christ? For
19 he knew that for envy they had delivered him. — When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying: Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

have contained the reading, *Jesus, the son of Abbas*, both in this and the following verse. Jesus, or Joshua, was a very common name among the Jews. The omission of this part of Barabbas' name is supposed to be made in honor of Christ.

17. *When they were gathered together*, i. e. at their return from Herod. How appalling to Pilate must it have been to behold the ferocious crowds swarming back to his palace, more eager than ever for blood! — *Whom will ye that I release unto you?* He put this question, desiring that they might choose to have the innocent rather than the guilty released, but their sense of justice, as well as of mercy, was swallowed up in one burning passion of hate against Jesus.

18, 19. According to Campbell, these two verses would more properly be included in a parenthesis, as they are a digression from the narrative. — *For envy.* Or, malice. Pilate understood their motives. They envied, or, rather, hated Jesus, for his power of working miracles, and speaking as man had never spoken. They hated him, especially, for his severe censures of their wickedness, and for his popularity with the people, which conflicted with their own insatiate love of domination. — *Delivered.* Should be *delivered up.* As it here stands, it means *freed*, the very opposite to the true sense. — *When he was set down on the judgment seat.* The tribunal was a high seat or throne, placed in the open court, in front of the Prætorium upon a pavement of Mosaic. John xix. 13. Since the Jews, through a hypocritical scrupulousness, could not enter the Prætorium, or Roman judgment hall, Pilate went forth to them, from time to time, to make or receive communications. John xviii. 29, 33, 38, xix. 4, 9, 13. — *Have thou nothing to do with that just man*, i. e. by way of injury. Pilate's wife was Claudia Procula. Testimonies to the innocence of Jesus came from the most unsuspicious quarters: from Judas the betrayer, from Pilate the heathen, and Herod the Jewish ruler, from Pilate's wife, and from the Roman centurion, who superintended the execution. It was customary, at this period, for the Roman officers to be accompanied by their wives in their circuits. — *Suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.* She was acquainted with the emergency in which her husband was placed, and the agitation of her mind naturally caused her to dream upon the exciting subject. Common rumor had spread the intelligence of Jesus' wonderful character and goodness, which now painfully mingles with her imaginations in sleep, and excites her apprehension, lest her husband would be forced to condemn him against his better judgment. The dream was, no doubt, natural. We are to recollect, that it was now early in the day, and that this might occur during her morning slumbers, when, according to general belief, dreams are most veracious.

Digitized by Google

——But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude 20
that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The 21
governor answered and said unto them: Whether of the
twain will ye that I release unto you? They said: Barabbas.
Pilate saith unto them: What shall I do then with Jesus, 22
which is called Christ? *They* all said unto him: Let him be
crucified. And the governor said: Why? what evil hath he 23
done? But they cried out the more, saying: Let him be cru-
cified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but 24
that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his*
hands before the multitude, saying: I am innocent of the blood

20. *Persuaded the multitude.* Jesus was popular with the mass of the Jewish people. His pure doctrine and sublime character found a response in the common heart. He had laid many under strong obligations of gratitude by his miracles of benevolence. He had fanned, too, the hope of the speedy advent of the Messiah. Multitudes had thronged him wherever he went. He had entered Jerusalem itself in peaceful triumph. Now, the scribes and priests were obliged to exert themselves to turn this popular tide. Jesus perished, in fact, by a cabal of the city and temple, not by the enmity of the great majority of his nation.

21. *Ask.* Should be *ask for.* They succeeded, but too well, in poisoning the minds of an already agitated and fickle crowd against their innocent victim. — *Whether of the twain.* Which of the two.

23. *Why? what evil hath he done?* Pilate was fully persuaded, that he had committed no crime worthy of death, and becoming interested in his prisoner, he was more and more anxious to save him. — *They cried out the more.* They employed only clamor, sensible that they were unsupported by reason and justice.

24. We are led to believe, from the narrative in Luke and John, that Pilate caused Jesus to be scourged, with a view to appease the ferocity of his enemies and procure his release. Luke xxiii. 16–22. John xix. 1–6. But the expedient was in vain. Like tigers, at the sight of blood, they raged with new fury. — *Saw that he could prevail nothing*, i. e. his exertions to release Jesus were unavailing. Observe the candor and charity of the writers, who assign the only plausible ground of excuse for Pilate, that he was overborne by a popular tumult, stirred up by the priests, and that he acted contrary to his own will, in condemning his innocent prisoner to death. They heap no abuse upon his name, nor call him weak and time-serving, as in reality he was, but let the plain facts speak for themselves, without comment. — *Took water, and washed his hands.* This was a symbolical act, common among the oriental people, showing that he disclaimed the responsibility and guilt of the transaction. Deut. xxi. 6, 7; Ps. xxvi. 6. But no washing of the hands could cleanse a conscience spotted with the blood of the innocent, whom at every hazard he was bound to protect. He forgot that most excellent law of the Romans, that "the idle clamor of the populace is not to be regarded when they call for a guilty man

Digitized by Google

25 of this just person; see ye *to it*. Then answered all the peo-
26 ple, and said: His blood *be* on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them; and when he had scourged
27 Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified. —— Then the soldiers

to be acquitted, or an innocent one to be condemned." But "Pilate thought, as many politicians do, that the safety of the state was to be preferred to a single act of injustice, and that he had better condemn an innocent person to death, than run the hazard to the state of a public commotion?" — *See ye to it*. Let the blame rest with you.

25. 1 Kings ii. 37. — *His blood be on us, &c.* A fearful imprecation, fearfully fulfilled! Not that the Jews, as a nation, brought down all the after woes upon themselves, merely by a handful of men saying these words in a mob at Jerusalem, but their stiff-neckedness and hard-heartedness were the real causes, under the government of God, of their succeeding unparalleled calamities. The same fell spirit of unbelief and wickedness, which broke out so furiously against Jesus, continued to wax stronger, and, at last, occasioned their final, decisive overthrow, in their terrible conflict with the Romans. It is a remarkable instance of the retributions of Divine Providence, that, in forty years from the time the Jews cried, Crucify him, Crucify him, before Pilate's Prætorium, Titus, the Roman general, besieging Jerusalem, crucified thousands, probably, including some of the enemies of Jesus, around the walls of the city, so that there was not room enough for the crosses, nor crosses enough for the men.

26. At this point of the tragedy, Carpenter gives the following, as the probable order of events: "Pilate, after washing his hands, yields to the Jews, releases Barabbas to them, and, in their presence, has Jesus scourged for crucifixion. Jesus is then taken within the fortress, and mocked by the Roman soldiers. Pilate brings him forth to the Jews, and afterwards has another conference with him within the Prætorium. He then brings him forth, formally condemns him, and delivers him up to be crucified." According to this view, there was but one scourging, and that was inflicted as preparatory to crucifixion; but yet was employed, as mentioned in the note on verse 24 of this chapter, in order to soften the Jews, that they might be moved to spare the life of Jesus. —*Scourged Jesus*. The cruelty of this infliction may be conceived of, when it is remembered, that the thongs were usually filled with pieces of lead, iron, or bone, to cause a greater laceration of the flesh, and that the poor sufferer was obliged to receive the blows upon the naked back in a stooping posture. The ancient scourging appears to have very much resembled the modern knout of Russia. The law of Moses forbade more than forty stripes, but the Romans were subject to no such merciful restriction. The punishment sometimes occasioned death, and appears to have weakened Jesus, in conjunction with other causes, so that, he was unable to carry his cross; and so that, he died in a few hours after he was put upon the fatal tree. Scourging always preceded crucifixion, as well as other executions, and added greatly to its pains, on account of the pressure of the torn and bleeding back against the frame of the cross, and the general inflammation of the system. — *Delivered him to be crucified*. Deliv-

Digitized by Google

of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band *of soldiers*. And they stripped him, 28
and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a 29
crown of thorns, they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon 30
him, and took the reed and smote him on the head. And after 31
that they had mocked him they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him; and led him away to crucify *him*.

ered up. The account in John is much more full in this connexion. John xix. 1 – 16.

27. *Common hall*, i. e. the Prætorium, Mark xv. 16, which was a magnificent edifice, built by Herod the Great, and occupied by the procurator of Judea, and his officers and soldiers, when he was in the city. — *The whole band*, i. e. of Roman soldiers. Probably a cohort is intended, the number of which varied, at different times, from three hundred to one thousand.

28. *Stripped him*, i. e. took off his upper garments. — *A scarlet robe*. Or, military cloak, such as officers and soldiers were accustomed to wear. Mark and John call it purple, instead of scarlet. These colors were often interchanged, one for the other. Hearing something of Jesus' being a king, they take this course to ridicule his royal pretensions.

29. *A crown of thorns*. Some learned men have contended, that acanthus, or bear's-foot, a soft-leafed plant, is meant; but there seems to be no necessity, on the whole, of departing from the usual opinion, which supposes that the leaves of the wreath were prickly and painful. — *A reed in his right hand*. In imitation of a royal sceptre. — *Bowed the knee, saying: Hail, king of the Jews!* These were tokens of homage to a king, offered in mockery to Jesus, in derision of his assuming, as they supposed, to be a rival of Cæsar.

30, 31. *Spit*. The tense should be past, not present. Matt. xxvi. 67. It has been truly remarked, that the same qualities of wickedness, which, on account of peculiar circumstances, here stand out so prominently, and which meet with our detestation, as exhibited in those bad characters, who moved in this conspicuous scene, may exist all about us in society, or lurk in ourselves unnoticed, because we see not their awful tendencies and consequences. The Twelve who desert, the Peter who denies, the Judas who betrays, the Pilate who condemns, the soldiers who mock, the culprit who reviles, the Son of God, — are they not essentially reproduced in every age, only circumstances have not brought them out upon a world-witnessed stage? No monstrous and unheard-of, but common depravity nailed the Holy Child of God to the cross, and heaped upon him all manner of abuse. To use the words of Robert Robinson; "One only loved money more than justice, and he sold him; others only loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, and they bought him; the officers only did as their masters bade them, and they took him, and bound him, and struck him; the soldiers only made them-

Digitized by Google

32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon
33 by name; him they compelled to bear his cross. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a

selves merry with a stranger, and they dressed him in an officer's coat and mocked him, and crowned him with thorns, and called him king, and bent the knee, and spat in his face; Pilate only wished to be popular, and he adjudged him to die; the thieves only did as other people did, and they reviled him."

32–56. For parallel places, see Mark xv. 21–41; Luke xxiii. 26–49; John xix. 17–30. The fearless honesty of the narrators is manifest from the differences in this history of the crucifixion. They write as we should suppose men would who had witnessed or heard of intensely exciting events; some relating one event, and some another; one differing from another in slight particulars, but all preserving a broad and general harmony, full of reality and truth.

32. *A man of Cyrene, Simon.* Cyrene was a city of Africa, lying west of Egypt, on the Mediterranean Sea, belonging to Libya. It was a great resort for the Jews, because they there enjoyed peculiar immunities and privileges. Whether Simon was a disciple of Jesus or not is unknown. Mark, xv. 21, speaks as if it were honorable to be known as the children of him who had aided the Great Master in his hour of faintness. — *Compelled.* See note on Matt. v. 41. The verb in the original has the like force, as *press* or *impress* in our language, referring to the compulsion by public authority. — *To bear his cross.* It was one of the refinements of cruelty and ignominy in this kind of punishment, that the sufferer must carry the instrument of his own death. The cross usually consisted of two transverse pieces, resembling the letter T, and was about eight or ten feet in height. Some have supposed, that only the cross-piece was borne by the doomed man, though painters have usually represented Christ as carrying the whole. It appears, that Jesus, after bearing it for a time, John xix. 17, gave way under his weakness and wounds, and the burden was transferred partly or wholly to the shoulders of Simon.

As our Lord had now left the tribunal of Pilate to meet his dreadful fate, it may be instructive to review that officer's many fruitless attempts to save his prisoner. 1st, He declines entering upon the case at all. John xviii. 31. 2d, He declares Jesus' innocence of the crime alleged. Luke xiii. 4; John xviii. 38. 3d, He tries to transfer the case to Herod's jurisdiction. Luke xxiii. 7. 4th, He hopes to release Jesus, on the ground of a festival custom. Luke xxiii. 16, 17. 5th, He strives to touch the hearts of the Jews, by the pitiable condition of Jesus after being scourged. John xix. 1–5. But, Roman as he was, he was unequal to the occasion. He was intimidated by the threat, that, if he released Jesus, he would not be Cæsar's friend. John xix. 12. How much more pitiable does the Roman procurator in all his state appear, with a craven, vacillating, and cowed spirit, than the glorious prisoner, calm, self-possessed, dauntless, above the fear of man, but compassionate towards human weakness and sin, a true Son of God! The moral cowardice we abhor, let us shun; the moral courage we admire, let us imbibe.

33. *Golgotha.* A Hebrew or Syriac word, meaning a skull. The place is so called, as some suppose,

Digitized by Google

place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with 34
gall; and when he had tasted *thereof*, he would not drink.
And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots; 35

from its shape; but others, with more probability, from its containing the bones or skulls of executed malefactors. It was a slight eminence, outside of the walls of the city on the northwest. Luke calls it Calvary, which means the same as Golgotha. Some interesting events, which occurred on the way to the place of execution, which was a mile, or a mile and a half distant from the prætorium, are given by Luke, xxiii. 27–31.

34. *Vinegar — gall.* This was designed to operate as an anodyne, to dull the sensibility to pain, and render death easier. The observance, upon this occasion, of the various Roman customs common to trials and executions, affords an intrinsic evidence of the genuineness and fidelity of the history. Mark, xv. 23, calls the drink, "wine mingled with myrrh." To reconcile this discrepancy, some understand the drinks to have been distinct from each other, that of Matthew being offered by the soldiers in derision, that of Mark being the *medicated* cup administered by friends to alleviate the pangs of crucifixion. But the far more probable view is, that the same drink is referred to under different names, vinegar standing for a kind of sour wine, and gall denoting any bitter drug, as myrrh, or wormwood. — *He would not drink.* He resolved to endure all without mitigation, and die in the full possession of his faculties. The cup, which his Father gave him, he would drink without shrinking. What admirable fortitude, worthy of our imitation in pain and death! He would strengthen us to bear all our sufferings without wavering. His infinitely greater agonies, so submissively borne, should hush every sigh of complaint, under our so much lighter afflictions, and fill us with a spirit of glad submission to the wise and kind will of our God.

35. As this verse brings us to the cross, let us look back from that point and see the tissue of injustice and cruelty, which was spread over the whole of the so-called trial of our Lord. 1st, He was beset with spies and informers. Luke xx. 20. 2d, His own disciple was bribed to betray him. Matt. xxvi. 15. 3d, He was seized and partially tried before the high priest *by night*, contrary to the Jewish law. Matt. xxvi. 74, xxvii. 1. 4th, He was carried before Annas first, and was all along kept bound, John xviii. 12, 13, 24, which were irregular and aggravating proceedings. 5th, He was exposed, uncondemned, to the brutalities of the servants. Luke xxii. 63, 65. 6th, He was brought before a prejudiced and passionate judge, who had already given his opinion, — a gross wrong. John xviii. 14. 7th, All proceedings were legally null and void, because it was the festival of the passover. 8th, He was called on by the high priest, and finally put under oath to criminate himself. John xviii. 19; Matt. xxvi. 63. 9th, John xviii. 22, He was wrongfully struck by an officer for a civil reply to the high priest. 10th, False witnesses were brought against him. Mark xiv. 56; Matt. xxvi. 59. 11th, His own words were perverted out of their true sense, to furnish ground for the charge of blasphemy, and for the sentence of death. Matt. xxvi. 65. 12th, The ground of accusation was changed before Pilate, from a religious offence, *blasphemy*, to a polit-

Digitized by Google

that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture 36 did they cast lots." And sitting down, they watched him there. 37 And set up over his head his accusation written: "THIS IS

ical one, *treason against the state.* Luke xxiii. 2. 13th, He was treated with mockery by Herod and his men of war, though he was not, in fact, under that ruler's jurisdiction. Luke xxiii. 11. 14th, A murderer was preferred to the Prince of Life. Mark xv. 11. 15th, He was condemned contrary to Pilate's repeated declaration, that he found him not guilty; was scourged, mocked, and crucified, because his judge had not firmness enough to withstand the fury of the priests and populace. 16th, The injustice was done him, while on the cross, of representing, by the inscription over his head, that he aimed at political power. Mark xv. 26. We see, therefore, that, if our Lord suffered the most cruel and ignominious punishment, it was through the grossest violations of legal forms, decency, and common justice. The cross was wet with the blood of the thrice innocent, thrice injured. — *They crucified him.* Abbott remarks, that "crucifixion is perhaps the most ingenious and the most perfect invention for mingling torture and death which was ever contrived. It is the very master-piece of cruelty. Life is to be destroyed, but, in this way of destroying it, it is arranged, with savage ingenuity, that no vital part shall be touched; the torturer goes to the very extremities, — to the hands and to the feet, and fixes his rough and rusty iron among the nerves and tendons there, and the poor sufferer hangs in a position which admits of no change, and no rest, until burning and torturing inflammation can work its way slowly to the seat of life, and extinguish it by the simple power of suffering." It was probably at the moment, the iron spikes were cruelly driven into his hands and feet by the brutal executioners, and he was raised aloft on the torturing tree, that he breathed that melting prayer, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke xxiii. 34. Those who were crucified were sometimes tied with thongs to the cross, but it is evident that nails were employed in this case. John xx. 25. — *Parted his garments, casting lots.* Those who were crucified were divested of their clothing. John, xix. 23, 24, mentions that the four soldiers, who fastened him to the cross, divided his other garments, but cast lots for his seamless coat or tunic, the inner garment, worn next to the body. It was customary for executioners to claim the clothes of those put to death. — *That it might be fulfilled.* Ps. xxii. 18. The remainder of this verse, including these words, is uniformly declared by critics of all sects to be an interpolation, probably taken from John xix. 24. It is not found in most of the early manuscripts, versions, and fathers. — Tacitus, the Roman historian, confirms the Gospel narrative of the death of Christ, in these words: "Nero put those who commonly went by the name of Christians to the most exquisite tortures. The author of this name was Christ, who was capitally punished in the reign of Tiberius, by Pontius Pilate, the procurator."

36. *They watched him.* A guard of Roman soldiers was stationed by the cross, to prevent a rescue.

37. *Set up over his head his accusation.* This was in obedience to the custom of the times, verse 11.

Digitized by Google

JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Then were there 38
two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and
another on the left. —— And they that passed by reviled him, 39
wagging their heads, and saying: Thou that destroyest the 40
temple, and buildest *it* in three days, save thyself; if thou be
the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the 41
chief priests, mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders, said: 42
He saved others, himself he cannot save; if he be the King
of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will
believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, 43

The only ground, on which he was accused by the Jews to Pilate, was, that of a political offence against the state, by stirring up the people, forbidding to pay tribute to Cæsar, and claiming to be himself a king. —*This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.* This sentence was written by Pilate, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. It is given in different words by the different writers, a discrepancy which makes against the literal and verbal inspiration of the Gospels, as do many other passages. The accounts, however, agree in the main points of the inscription. Pilate upon this occasion, see John xix. 21, 22, appears to have manifested the irritation of feeling consequent upon being forced to condemn Jesus against his will. He would gratify no farther, complain as they might. The writing he put up was, however, calculated to mislead the people with the idea, that the aim of Jesus was a political one.

38. *Two thieves.* Rather, two robbers, or persons guilty of violence, perhaps the companions of Barabbas. It was usual to execute criminals at the great festivals, for the sake of example, in terror to evil doers.

39. *Reviled him, wagging their heads.* A gesture of ridicule and insult.

40. *Thou that destroyest the temple.* This was a perversion of his words. He had said to the Jews, "Destroy this temple," referring to his own body. Chap. xxvi. 61.

42. *He saved others.* As Cappe has observed, "Here is a very credible testimony to the reality of his miracles, the more credible that it is incidental," and because it comes, too, from the mouth of his enemies. —*Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.* It was a cutting taunt, and, as Furness has remarked, "who has ever paused over these words for the first time without feeling that they contained a bitter force — without secretly saying to himself, O why did he not come down? If he had power to heal the sick and raise the dead, why did he not descend then from the cross, and dissipate all doubt for ever!" But he used not his extraordinary gifts for his own sake. He had already given sufficient proof to satisfy all reasonable and unprejudiced minds that he was the Messiah; and his descent from the cross would not have convinced the unreasonable and prejudiced. His object was not triumph, but truth, and a jeer or a sarcasm could not turn him aside from the cause of God, and the salvation of the world. His foes were so bound up in self themselves, that they could not comprehend that heroic self-sacrifice which would die for others. They knew so little of the human

Digitized by Google

44 if he will have him; for he said: I am the Son of God. The
thieves also which were crucified with him cast the same in his
45 teeth. —— Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over

heart, that they did not see that by elevating Jesus upon the cross they had lifted him into the throne of his universal kingdom, and that he would now draw the hearts of all mankind to him with the cords of love. John xii. 32, 33. The cross! Instrument of torture; sign of ignominy! How gloriously was it now to be honored, hallowed by the unnatural burden it bore! Henceforward, its disgrace, deeper than the scaffold and halter, was to be wiped off. Henceforward, waving on the banners of nations, inscribed in the heraldry of honor, sparkling on the breast of beauty and the crown of kings, shining among the constellations of heaven, clenched by the hands of the dying, as their anchor of immortal hope, towering over the tomb and the cathedral, the speaking symbol and epitome of the Gospel, the cross was to gather about it the brightest halo of glory, and command the ever-increasing love and veneration of the human race. The love of the Father towards his sinful and wretched children, in sending his Son; the love of the heavenly Brother for his erring earthly brethren, shown in his there pouring out his life-blood, to melt their hearts of stone, and reconcile them to their Father and his Father, were henceforth to consecrate the cross to all ages.

"In the cross of Christ I glory!—
Towering o'er the wrecks of time,
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime."

43. *If he will have him.* Translated by Carpenter, if he delighteth in him. There is in Plato, where he describes the credentials necessary to give weight to a teacher of virtue, this expression, singularly coinciding with the history of Jesus: "After he has borne all evils, let him be crucified."

44. *The thieves.* The robbers. It appears from Luke xxiii. 39, that only one of them was guilty of this abuse. Had the Gospels been composed by impostors, they never would have permitted such discrepancies. — *Cast the same in his teeth.* More elegantly, reviled him in the same way. Luke mentions, xxiii. 36, 37, that the soldiers also joined in these impious mockeries. — Socrates, to whom some have been fond of comparing Jesus Christ, spent his last hours in quiet among weeping friends and disciples, and the executioner gave him the fatal cup of hemlock with tears in his eyes. But our Master, throughout his trial and crucifixion, was surrounded by a whirlwind of raging passions, blows, and insults. Yet with what self-possession, dignity, and kindness to those around him, did he meekly endure all, commending himself to the Father! Even Rousseau could say: "If the life and death of Socrates are those of a philosopher, the life and death of Jesus Christ are those of a Divinity." The interesting events respecting the penitent malefactor, and the intrusting of Jesus' mother to the care of John, probably occurred here. Luke xxiii. 40–43; John xix. 25–27.

45. *Sixth hour*, i. e. twelve o'clock. Jesus was crucified about the third hour according to Mark xv. 25, but according to John xix. 14, about the sixth hour, though the original reading is thought to have been *the third.* He is supposed to have remained, therefore, upon the cross from nine o'clock in the morning to about

Digitized by Google

all the land, unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour 46
Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: Eli, Eli, lama sabac-
thani? that is to say: My God, my God, why hast thou for-
saken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard 47
that, said: This *man* calleth for Elias. And straightway one 48
of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and

three in the afternoon, or about six hours. — *Darkness over all the land*, i. e. probably only over all the land of Judea, for so the words are usually translated. This would account in some degree for so remarkable an event not having been recorded by any profane writer. The darkness could not have been caused by an eclipse of the sun, for the moon was then in the full, as it always was, at the time of the passover. The atmosphere is frequently darkened when earthquakes occur. But the Evangelists certainly record the event as if it were supernatural. "The visible heavens and earth sympathize with Jesus." — *Ninth hour*, i. e. three o'clock P. M.

46. *Jesus cried with a loud voice.* Which shows, with vivid reality, his great agony. The system, already fainting and dying, gathers up its strength and pours out one fearful cry. — *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* Ps. xxii. 1. This is Hebrew and Syro-Chaldaic. Mark, xv. 34, has it all in the latter dialect, which is supposed to have been used by our Saviour and his contemporaries. This exclamation has been explained as intended by him to show the appropriateness of Ps. xxii., as a description of his suffering condition, but eventual triumph; or, secondly, as denoting a destitution of that Divine help which he had hitherto enjoyed, and the pouring upon his devoted head of the vials of the wrath of God for the sins of the world; or, thirdly, that the powers of darkness then peculiarly beset his spirit. But these views are all more or less strained and far-fetched. As to the first, we may say, it was no time for Jesus to argue, directly or indirectly, when he was dying in agony; and as to the last two, they are totally destitute of any proof, either by way of declaration or inference, and are counter to the words of Jesus, that "therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life." John x. 17. It is better, with Furness, to understand it "as an expression of agony couched in the devout language of Scripture," — "an ejaculation wrung from him by the intense suffering of the moment." Jesus was accustomed to pray to God in the words of the Psalms, as in chap. xi. 25, compared with Ps. viii. 2. This was not a cry of despair; God had not really deserted him; but it was rather an earnest entreaty, and, as it were, an expostulation with the Father that he would not desert him in that dreadful hour.

47. *Calleth for Elias*, i. e. Elijah. This word had a similar sound to that of Eli. Some of the bystanders, either through ignorance of the language which he spoke, for many foreigners were present, or, more probably, through derision of his claims to the Messiahship, pretended that he was calling upon Elijah, who was to be the forerunner of the great Deliverer, according to the Jewish belief.

48. *Filled it with vinegar, &c.* The occasion of this act is related in John xix. 28, where Jesus said, "I thirst." It was one of the effects of crucifixion to produce a gen-

Digitized by Google

49 put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said: Let
50 be; let us see whether Elias will come to save him. —— Jesus,
when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the
51 ghost. —— And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in
twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake,
52 and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened; and many

eral inflammation and fever through the whole frame, and, consequently, a burning and intolerable thirst, similar to that caused by gunpowder wounds, and which calls forth from the field of battle, when the carnage is over, the most piercing cries for water. A vessel was placed by the cross, as we learn from John, filled with vinegar, the usual beverage of Roman soldiers. When Jesus uttered his cry, some one, more compassionate than the rest, dipped a porous substance or sponge in the vinegar, and elevated it upon a reed or hyssop stalk to the parched lips of the dying sufferer. Some have supposed that the hyssop spoken of by John was a bitter substance put into the drink.

49. *Let be.* According to Robinson, the union of the word in the original with the succeeding verb, *to see*, has simply this sense, *let us see;* or, as others say, it has the sense of, *come, let us see.*

50. *Cried again with a loud voice.* The convulsive gasp of dissolving nature. See note on verse 46. Luke and John mention more particularly his last words. From the different narratives we gather that he spoke seven times while on the cross, and each sentence imparts a distinct light and beauty to his divine character. 1. His prayer for his enemies. Luke xxiii. 34. 2. His compassionate address to the penitent malefactor. Luke xxiii. 43. 3. His filial devotion to Mary, and fraternal regard for his beloved disciple. John xix. 26, 27. 4. His expostulatory prayer to God, in his terrible pain. Matt. xxvii. 46. Mark xv. 34. 5. His expression of thirst. John xix. 28. 6. His declaration, "It is finished." John xix. 30. 7. His devout commendation of his spirit to the Father. Luke xxiii. 46. Such was the fitting close to a life spent in unbounded love to God and man. — *Yielded up the ghost.* Not by his own volition, as some have singularly supposed, which would be hardly distinguishable from suicide. The better translation is, *he expired.* Persons sometimes lived two, three, or even seven days on the cross. But various causes might combine to shorten the sufferings of Jesus: his supposed tenderness of constitution; his previous watching and sufferings in the garden, and during the mock trial; and especially the infliction of scourging. He had become so faint before he came to the place of execution, that he could not carry the cross. Comp. verse 32 with John xix. 17.

51. *The veil of the temple was rent in twain.* The veil here meant was the inner one between the sanctuary and the Holy of Holies. Heb. ix. 3. It seems unlikely that any *natural* cause, short of the destruction of the temple, would have torn apart this veil. The event may be viewed as symbolical of the admission of all men, Jews and Gentiles, to the mysteries and privileges of God's holiest sanctuary of truth. —*The earth did quake, and the rocks rent. Were rent* is required by grammar, as in the first part of the verse. These unusual events marked the

Digitized by Google

bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the 53
graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and
appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that 54
were with him watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those
things which were done, they feared greatly, saying: Truly
this was the Son of God. —— And many women were there, 55
beholding afar off; which followed Jesus from Galilee, minis-

death of the Son of God with deep solemnity. The very heavens and earth muttered indignation against the impious doings of men. A great earthquake is said by the Latin writers to have occurred about this time, but it cannot with certainty be identified with the one in the text.

52, 53. *The graves were opened.* As it would appear, by the earthquake, which split the rocks or tombs of stone. — *The saints.* Who these were is not stated. Their rising would intimate, that resurrection was not to be peculiar to Jesus, but designed to extend to others also. — *After his resurrection.* It is singular that an interval of one day and two nights should occur between their rising and coming out of their graves and entering the city. Matthew does not speak of being himself an eyewitness of the fact, which has led some critics to suppose, that he rather gives what was commonly reported, than vouches himself for the truth of the events. No mention of so astonishing an occurrence and its effects is made by the other Evangelists. As observed by Dr. Adam Clarke, "the place is extremely obscure," and "it is difficult to account for the transaction." It has been conjectured, that these two verses might have been introduced into the text from the Nazarene Gospel, one of the apocryphal books, or from the Hebrew copy of Matthew's Gospel, where it had been inserted by some transcriber as a note in the margin. But the passage is found in all the best authorities.

54. *The centurion,* i. e. the commander of the soldiers, who attended at the place of execution and watched those that were crucified. — *Truly this was the Son of God.* The words were those of the centurion, Mark xv. 39, Luke xxiii. 47, and were perhaps repeated by his soldiers. Luke represents him as saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man," which might have been in addition to the language recorded in this place. He had, probably, caught the words of the allegation against Jesus, that he claimed to be the Son of God. Witnessing the tremendous events around him, the darkened sun, the reverberation of the earthquake, the rending of the rocks, and the awful consternation of the surrounding multitude, he said, with Roman frankness, This man was not an impostor, but a just person; he was, what he professed to be, the Son of God, or of a God; — for we are to remember that the centurion was in all probability a polytheist, and ignorant of the true Deity. Luke, xxiii. 48, adds some interesting particulars, showing the overwhelming fear of the multitude.

55, 56. *Many women were there, beholding afar off.* Probably, outside of the crowd of soldiers and enemies of Jesus, who surrounded the cross. They had followed Jesus from Galilee, and supplied his wants from their substance. Luke viii. 3. They did not desert him in the last exigency, but heroically fol-

Digitized by Google

56 tering unto him; among which was Mary Magdalene, and
Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebe-
dee's children.

57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arima-
thea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple.

58 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate

---

lowed him with streaming eyes to the fatal mount, and from a distance witnessed the death of their matchless friend, and the great benefactor of their sex. If the last scenes of Jesus' life called forth some of the worst traits of human character, they also called forth some of the best; the penitence of the robber, the reverence of the centurion, and the attachment of those devoted friends, "daughters of Zion, faithful to the last." — *Mary Magdalene*, i. e. of Magdala. Matt. xv. 39; Luke viii. 2. — *Mary the mother of James and Joses.* She was the sister of Jesus' mother. Mark xv. 40; John xix. 25; Matt. x. 3. Her husband was called Alpheus and Cleopas, which are the Greek and Hebrew for the same name. — *The mother of Zebedee's children.* Salome. Mark xv. 40. Her sons were James and John. Chap. x. 2. The mother of Jesus was also present at this most painful scene, when, according to the early prediction, a sword must have pierced through her own soul. Luke ii. 35.

57 – 61. Mark xv. 42 – 47; Luke xxiii. 50 – 56; John xix. 38 – 42. Previously to the account of the burial of Jesus, John, xix. 31 – 37, relates that a soldier ran a spear into his side, and that blood and water came out, a medical proof that he was now dead.

57. *When the even was come.* This was the evening before the Jewish Sabbath. Dead bodies were not allowed by the Jews to remain on the cross over night. Deut. xxi. 23. — *Arimathea.* There were several places so called in Palestine. The one here intended was probably a village five or six miles northward of Jerusalem. — *Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple.* This wealthy individual was undoubtedly a member of the Jewish Sanhedrim. Mark xv. 43; Luke xxiii. 51. He did not consent to the injustice of his associates in putting Jesus to death. He and Nicodemus appear to have been the sincere disciples of our Lord, but did not possess that moral courage, which would enable them to come out boldly and espouse an unpopular cause at the hazard of losing caste. But after the crucifixion, indignant at the baseness of their countrymen, and armed in their souls with new convictions of the greatness of the sufferer, by witnessing his sublime conduct, and the appalling circumstances which attended his death, they boldly engaged in paying the last tribute of respect to his lifeless remains. John xix. 39.

58. *Begged the body of Jesus.* — John relates, xix. 31 – 37, some other particulars, that, as it was not lawful for the bodies to remain upon the cross over the Sabbath, the Jews entreated Pilate that their dying struggles might be hastened by the usual cruel method of breaking their legs, which was rendered unnecessary in the case of Jesus, as he had already expired. Joseph would show his reverence for Jesus by performing his funeral service. —

Digitized by Google

commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had 59
taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid 60
it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock;
and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and
departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other 61
Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, 62
the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, say- 63

Commanded the body to be delivered. The bodies were at Pilate's disposal. It was customary to grant those of crucified persons to their friends for burial, if they requested it, but otherwise, they were either burned, or buried in the common grave of criminals. Providence thus employed the friendship of Joseph as an instrument by which the body of the Saviour was saved from burning, or a promiscuous burial with others, and was thus capable of being identified in the event of its resurrection.

59. *Wrapped it in a clean linen cloth.* As time would not then allow them to go through the long process of embalming the body, they hastily wrapped it in a large cloth, filled with spices, myrrh, and aloes, one hundred weight of which had been brought by Nicodemus. John xix. 39, 40; 2 Chron. xvi. 14. Coffins were not used by the Jews in burying the dead.

60. *His own new tomb,—hewn out in the rock,—he rolled a great stone to the door.* Every word is important and significant. 1. The tomb was new and no one had yet been buried in it. Luke xxiii. 53; John xix. 41. Wherefore the body of Jesus would not be confounded with any other. 2. It was a tomb in a rock, a common circumstance in Judea. No other access therefore existed except by the door, and no facility was afforded either for exchanging the body or removing it. 3. The only entrance was perfectly secured by a large stone which was sealed, verse 66. Every step, therefore, was taken, though undesignedly, to make "assurance doubly sure," as to the identity of the body of our Lord when it was raised. No room was left for deception or mistake. John, xix. 41, 42, speaks of the tomb being in a garden, and near the cross. The location is still pointed out with considerable certainty, as a church was early erected over it.

61. *Mary Magdalene.* See note on verse 56.—*The other Mary, sitting, &c.* They were witnesses of the burial. With devoted hearts they still linger near the tomb of their lost benefactor, according to the custom of females in the east, lamenting over the graves of their friends. We are here reminded of that beautiful eulogy on woman by the poet:—

"Not she with traitorous kiss her Saviour stung;
Not she denied him with unholy tongue:
She, when Apostles shrank, could danger brave;
Last at his cross, and earliest at his grave."

62. *The next day, that followed the day of the preparation.* The Jewish day began at sunset. As Jesus was crucified on Friday, and the Jewish Sabbath, which, at this time, was a high day, being a paschal Sabbath, the Jews went to Pilate on the next day according to Jewish phraseology, but on the same evening according to ours. Of course they

Digitized by Google

ing: Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was
64 yet alive: After three days I will rise again. Command
therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day,
lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say
unto the people: He is risen from the dead; so the last error
65 shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them: Ye have
66 a watch; go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they
went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and set-
ting a watch.

---

would not have waited until the next morning after the burial, for they would have feared the robbery of the tomb, during the darkness, by the disciples. The *preparation* here spoken of was the preparation for the paschal Sabbath, not the paschal feast. Luke xxiii. 54; John xix. 31, 42.

63. *That deceiver said.* That impostor. They still remained hardened. The portents at Jesus' death, and his own divine bearing on the cross, had not subdued their impenitence. — *After three days I will rise again.* Matt. xii. 40, xvi. 21, xvii. 23, xx. 19, xxvi. 61. The prediction of Jesus had become known among the Jewish people, an evidence that no imposture was designed, for, had there been, the Jews would not have been forewarned so that they could have prevented it. — *After three days* means, according to Jewish computation, within three days, or on the third day. 2 Chron. x. 5, 12. It is remarkable, that "Jesus' greatest enemies bear witness that before his death he had foretold his resurrection within three days."

64. *That the sepulchre be made sure*, i. e. by a Roman guard. — *Error.* Rather, deception, or imposture. Their plea is, that greater influence would be exerted over the people by the assertion, that he had risen from the dead, than had resulted from his exertions while living; a judgment which was confirmed by subsequent facts.

65. *Ye have a watch.* Or, as some have suggested, *take a watch*, or *guard*, putting the verb in the imperative. Whether the Jews had a guard under their direction or not, is somewhat uncertain. If they had, it was unnecessary for them to apply to Pilate. It is observable, however, that the watch send a message to the priests, as if they were responsible to them, chapter xxviii. 11. A body of Roman soldiers was usually stationed in the castle of Antonia, near the temple, to quell any disturbance that might occur in the city. The Roman *watch* properly consisted of sixteen soldiers, who were divided into four companies, each company being on guard three hours.

66. *Sealing the stone.* Probably a band was passed over the stone, and sealed with the public stamp. Dan. vi. 17. Thus, every precaution, which Jewish malice or Roman power could devise, was employed to frustrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His enemies were satisfied that he was really dead. He was buried in a strong rock tomb, and the mouth closed with a heavy stone, and sealed by the public authority. Roman soldiers, distinguished for their perfect discipline, were placed on guard over his body. If under these circumstances he arose from the dead, it must be re-

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Resurrection of Jesus, and his Farewell Commands.

IN the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other

garded as an unquestionable proof of the divinity of his mission, the truth of his religion, and the faithfulness of his promises. "If this counsel or this work had been of men, it would have come to nought" in the sepulchre of Jesus; "but, as it was of God, it could not be overthrown," though Jew and Roman joined together for its extinction.

"The Sabbath came, with its holy hours of worship and rest. The incense and the sacrifices were offered up in the temple, and its ample courts resounded with the tread of innumerable worshippers, and the voices of those who sang praise. There were no signs to show that the glory of Israel, the object of so many prophecies, the desire of all nations, the great benefactor of the human race, had just been rudely destroyed by the people whom he had come to bless. The festival went on, and the crowded city rejoiced. — But all were not thus. There were friends of that holy and just one, who, though they were far from a full comprehension of his character, yet mourned him in the depths of their souls as the most excellent and admirable of beings. It is easy to judge what was the gloom of this day to them. To the eleven Apostles especially, who had cause to feel shame for their desertion of him, as well as grief at his death, it must have been a day of unmixed sorrow and despair. — Thus the Sabbath passed away, and the dawn of the first day of the week drew nigh." — *Ware.*

CHAP. XXVIII.

1–10. See Mark xvi. 1–11; Luke xxiv. 1–11; John xx. 1, 2, 18. Different writers have harmonized with more or less success the seemingly conflicting accounts of the resurrection. But the very discrepancies which have been adduced, to shake the genuineness and authority of the Gospels, are proofs of independence, and the absence of concert on the part of the writers, and strikingly betray that agitation and astonishment which must have possessed all who witnessed the amazing facts of the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. The following seems the most probable sequence of events on this most interesting occasion. 1. Several women, among whom was Mary Magdalene, came to the sepulchre and found it open. 2. She hastened to inform Peter and John. 3. Meantime the other women saw two angels. 4. Peter and John, informed of the wonderful intelligence, ran to the sepulchre. 5. Mary Magdalene returns after them, and sees the two angels, and subsequently Jesus. 6. He soon after appears also to the other women, probably on their return.

1. *In the end of the Sabbath.* The original, according to the best critics, signifies *after the Sabbath;* or, as Mark has it, "when the Sabbath was past." — *Began to dawn toward the first day of the week*, i. e. about daybreak of our Sabbath, which has ever been observed as the day of rest and devotion since the resurrection of our Lord, in token of that

Digitized by Google

2 Mary, to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great
earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven,
and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat
3 upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment
4 white as snow. And for fear of him the keepers did shake,
5 and became as dead *men*. And the angel answered and said
unto the women: Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus,
6 which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he
7 said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go
quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead;
and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye

---

glorious event. — *Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary.* See chap. xxvii. 61. Mark mentions Salome, also, as one of the company, xvi. 1, and Luke specifies Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and intimates that there were other women also with them, xxiv. 10. Ministering to Jesus during his life, witnessing with grief and horror his crucifixion, and watching his burial, they now come with devoted but heavy hearts, after the solemnities of the holy day, to pay their last offices of respect to his lifeless remains by embalming them in costly spices.

2–4. *There was a great earthquake.* Rather, there *had been*, before the women arrived at the tomb. — *His countenance.* His appearance or aspect. — *The keepers did shake, &c.*, i. e. the Roman guard. The object of the earthquake and the appearance of the angel was to prevent any opposition, on the part of the soldiers, to Jesus' rising and meeting his friends. Romans as they were, they shrank appalled before the supernatural manifestation. The women had consulted on the way how they should get the stone removed, for it was very large, Mark xvi. 3, 4, by which it appears that they had not been apprized, that the tomb was guarded, and the stone sealed. As they approached and saw the remarkable appearances, the guard prostrate, and the tomb opened, Mary Magdalene ran back to inform Peter and John, xx. 2, leaving the other women at the sepulchre, who, during her absence, witnessed what is related in the following verses, 5–8. Mark xvi. 5–8; Luke xxiv. 4–11.

5–7. *Said unto the women: Fear not.* These were the associates of Mary Magdalene, who remained after she had hastened to inform Peter and John. The celestial messenger would quiet their fears, by the gracious assurance that Jesus had risen; he gave them a message to his disciples, as if in token of honor for their unfaltering attachment and heroism. — *He is risen, as he said.* Or, he is raised up. Jesus had uniformly coupled the prediction of his resurrection with his death. Matthew xx. 19, xxvi. 32. Mark gives the interesting particular, that the message was sent to the disciples and *Peter*, thereby kindly intimating that his fault of denying his Master was forgiven. — *He goeth before you into Galilee.* He had already assigned this as a place of meeting. Matt. xxvi. 32. The different statements of the Evangelists, in relation to the angels, their appearance, and words, are significant

Digitized by Google

see him; lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from 8
the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his
disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, 9
Jesus met them, saying: All hail! And they came and held
him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto 10
them: Be not afraid; go tell my brethren that they go into
Galilee, and there shall they see me.

---

of that artlessness and straight-forwardness, which seek not to anticipate and harmonize difficulties, but to relate the honest truth.

8. *They departed.* Rather, *they going out* from the sepulchre — ran. — *Fear and great joy.* What dramatist, though it were Shakspeare, ever laid open the feelings of the human heart, as called forth in great emergencies, with more fidelity to nature, than is done in these simple words of the Evangelist! The awe of the spiritual world, into whose secrets they had just obtained so deep a glance, rested upon the women; but a great joy and unspeakable gladness that their friend had been raised up, also filled their hearts. Thus their fear and their joy were not incongruous sentiments, but harmonious one with the other, and, likewise, with the circumstances of the case.

9. In the interim, Peter and John, who had been informed by Mary Magdalene of the opening of the sepulchre, had come to the place, examined the tomb, and returned. Mary Magdalene, also, had come back again to the sepulchre, and been favored with a vision of angels, and, subsequently, with an interview with her risen Master. See Luke xxiv. 12; John xx. 3–17; Mark xvi. 9. — *As they went to tell his disciples, &c.* Jesus had already appeared to Mary Magdalene; he now manifested himself to the women, who were returning from the tomb to inform his disciples of the resurrection. This order of events is attended, on the whole, with the fewest difficulties. See note at the beginning of this chapter. — *All hail!* Rejoice, or, Peace be to you. Luke xxiv. 36. The common salutation, fitted to calm their fears at meeting him, and inspire them with joy at the great event of his resurrection. — *Held him by the feet.* Like suppliants, who cast themselves on the ground and embrace the knees or feet of princes and great men in the east. — *Worshipped him.* See note on Matt. ii. 2. This was a mark of deep respect, an act of obeisance, but, by no means, of divine homage and worship, as has been popularly represented. Who can do such violence to the simplicity of the Gospels, as to suppose that those, who, at various times, fell down in respect or supplication at Jesus' feet, adored him as the very God! Why, if they did, did they not call him God! It is painful to think what wrestings, chiefly unintentional, there have been of the Holy Scriptures, and how their luminous pages have been overlapped and beclouded by the theories and dreams of dogmatists. "The simplicity of Christ" possesses a charm the world has seldom felt and little appreciates.

10. *Be not afraid; go tell my brethren.* With mild and condescending words Jesus would soothe their troubled minds. He even calls his disciples by the endearing title of *Brethren;* forgetting and forgiving their denial and desertion of him. John xv. 15. Furness remarks truly, that "it is impossible

Digitized by Google

11 Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came
into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things
12 that were done. And when they were assembled with the
elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto
13 the soldiers, saying: Say ye: His disciples came by night,
14 and stole him *away*, while we slept. And if this come to

that any one could have fabricated a personage whose tone of sentiment and expression should be in perfect accordance with that wonderful being who had a little while before expired on the cross. No human art could have added another chapter to that life." The words and deeds of the risen Jesus are all in beautiful harmony with those of the previously living Jesus. This identity of conduct and character is evidence of the reality of the resurrection.

11. *Showed unto the chief priests.* Either because they knew the priests would be most interested in the matter, or because they were under their command, and responsible to them for what occurred. See note on chap. xxvi. 65.

12. *Assembled with the elders, &c.* A meeting of the Sanhedrim was called.—*Large money.* A large sum of money. This was given as a bribe to the soldiers to induce them to circulate a false report respecting the rising of Jesus. A fit conclusion to the long train of iniquity of which the priests and Scribes had been guilty, to destroy the innocent, but which had only redounded to their shame and his glory.

13. *Stole him away, while we slept.* Fox, in his sermon on the Jews' account of the resurrection, has well summed up the inconsistencies of this story. 1st, As the soldiers changed guard every three hours, it was improbable that they should sleep. 2d, This improbability is increased by the fact that there were several, who would not all be likely to sleep at the same time, or to sleep during the noise of opening the tomb and removing the body. 3d, The severity of the Roman military discipline, which made it death for a soldier to be sleeping on his post, would keep them awake. 4th, They testified to what took place during their sleep, when they could have witnessed nothing. 5th, Had the body been lost through their negligence, they would have been the last persons to confess it. 6th, If we now turn from the soldiers to the disciples, we shall see that it would have answered no purpose to have got possession of the body by violent means. 7th, They were too poor to bribe the soldiers. 8th, As the tomb was in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and it was now the time of the passover, full moon, they would have been observed and detected by others, even if they had eluded, or bribed, or destroyed, the soldiers. 9th, The state of confusion and fear into which the death of Jesus plunged them would incapacitate them for forming and executing so daring a plan. 10th, If the Jewish story were true, the disciples must have been either the confederates or dupes of Jesus, and they would therefore have been either enraged or overwhelmed by his death, so as to be disqualified for taking such a step. 11th, The disciples, in common with the rest of the Jews, expected a temporal Messiah. But the raising of Christ from the tomb would not further that end in the least. To assert that he had been raised up, when

Digitized by Google

the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught. And this 15 saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into 16 a mountain, where Jesus had appointed them. And when 17 they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And 18 Jesus came and spake unto them, saying: All power is given

---

he had not been in reality, would have been a gratuitous, useless, yet dangerous fiction. 12th, If the Jewish tale were true, would neither the disciples have suffered for their theft, nor the soldiers for permitting it, but all parties have escaped punishment? It is incredible.

14, 15. *If this come to the governor's ears.* Or, if this come to a hearing or trial before the governor. — *We will persuade him.* Rather, appease or conciliate him. — *Secure you*, i. e. insure you against harm, set you at rest about the matter. — *This saying*, i. e. that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus while the soldiers slept. — *Until this day*, i. e. the time when the Evangelist wrote the account, which, according to Dr. Lardner, was about 30 years after. The credulity and prejudices of the Jews were easily satisfied with this barefaced imposition. They wished to believe it, and they took no pains to ascertain the truth.

16. The accounts of the appearance of Jesus to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and to Peter, Luke xxiv. 13 – 34, 1 Cor. xv. 5, and twice to the Apostles at Jerusalem, and also to some of them at the Lake of Galilee, John xx. 19 – 30, xxi. 1 – 23, are omitted by Matthew. — *Then the eleven disciples went, &c.* This verse is connected with the tenth, and what intervenes may be regarded as in some measure parenthetical. Although only eleven disciples are here mentioned, yet it is very probable that many more went to see Jesus; perhaps the five hundred spoken of by Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 6. The reason of holding the interview in Galilee was, that they would not be exposed to the animosity of the Jews, John xx. 19, and because in Galilee he chiefly passed the time of his ministry, and gathered the most of his disciples. A mountain was chosen, as more free from interruption, and perhaps better accommodated to a large multitude.

17. *They worshipped him*, i. e. did him obeisance, see note on verse 9. — *But some doubted.* Since more than eleven were present, it is likely that some of them, perhaps at a distance from Jesus, on account of the greatness of the crowd, doubted whether it was indeed he; but from the following verse, it appears that Jesus approached them, and then, of course, their doubts would be dissipated, and they would be satisfied of his identity. The frankness with which the narrator states that some doubted, without giving one word of explanation, reveals his guileless, fearless honesty, and unhesitating confidence in the candid and reasonable construction of his readers. The fact, that some of those who saw Jesus after his resurrection doubted, is of value, as showing that they did not receive things without examination, nor believe without sufficient evidence. As an old writer has said "they doubted, that we might not doubt."

18. *Jesus came and spake unto them.* He approaches them, and those who doubted would then be

Digitized by Google

19 unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,

satisfied that it was indeed he. — *All power is given unto me, &c.* i. e. all authority necessary for the establishment of his spiritual kingdom both over the Jewish and Gentile world, for so the expressions, *in heaven and in earth*, sometimes signify in sacred phraseology. This language of Jesus may be illustrated by a reference to John v. 22, xvii. 2; Acts ii. 36, v. 31; Eph. i. 20–22; Col. i. 18, where it is said that all judgment is committed unto the Son, that power is given him over all flesh, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, and put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to the church. The general terms of the Bible are always to be limited and interpreted by the connexion in which they stand, and the subject to which they apply. *All power*, in this verse, cannot signify omnipotence, for that cannot be communicated from one being to another, but is the attribute of One alone. *Is given*, therefore, restricts the meaning of the clause, and proves that what was bestowed on Jesus was not an infinite attribute, for that would be an absurdity, but such an extensive authority, as was necessary for the promotion of his religion. So that the very words that have been used to prove that Jesus was God, when fairly construed, prove directly the reverse, by showing, what he incessantly declared, that his power was not innate, or self-derived, but delegated. His words were the words of the Father, his works the works of the Father, his life, his spirit, his power, were given him by the Father; to the Father he was responsible for his conduct and character, his mission and ministry; and as if foreseeing, with prophetic eye, that his followers would confound him with God, and deify him, he said, "My Father is greater than I," without the least intimation that he possessed two natures, only one of which was inferior to the Father. See John iii. 34, 35, v. 36, xvii. 4, 8, 12, 18; Heb. v. 8; 1 Cor. iii. 23.

19. *Therefore*, i. e. since I am endowed with all authority, I give you this commission. — *Teach all nations.* Or, more exactly, according to the original, make disciples of, or in, all nations. A declaration that his religion was to be universal. As we should now say, Christianize the whole world. The word *teach* in this verse is a different one in the Greek from that translated *teaching* in the next verse, and ought to be rendered differently. One means to *make disciples of*, the other to instruct in the doctrines and duties of religion. One expresses an incipient act, the other a more advanced one. — *Baptizing them in the name.* Rather, *into* the name, i. e. into the profession of. *Name* is redundant. The sense is, baptizing them into the Father, &c. Infant baptism is not here mentioned, but, as it was a prevalent custom to baptize the children of proselytes to the Jewish religion, and as Christ makes no prohibition of their being baptized, the easy and natural inference is, that, in going forth to baptize all nations, as a token of their profession of Christianity, the Apostles were to baptize both young and old. The initiatory rite of circumcision under Judaism also furnishes an argument from general analogy in vindication of the baptism of children. It is observable, that no specification is made either as to

Digitized by Google

and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to 20

the quantity of water, or the mode of performing the rite. — *Of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Or, Holy Spirit. They were to baptize their disciples into a profession of the Father of all, with whom the Gospel originated, and of his Son, whom he sent to preach it and *to live it*, and of the Holy Spirit, by which it was miraculously confirmed, and with whose influences and blessings it was ever to be accompanied. This form of words was designed by Christ to imbody the great elements of his religion. The belief and worship of the Father was to supersede both Jewish peculiarities and heathen superstitions. The partition wall between Jews and Gentiles was to be thrown down by the acknowledgment of one God and Father of all. His Son and Messenger was to be recognised in his Divine authority, as the revealer of the new religion. The miraculous agency by which it was originally established, and the Divine influences from on high with which it would always be attended, were to be objects of faith to the Christian convert. For the Jews in particular had rejected the Son as the Messenger of God, and attributed the agency of the Holy Spirit to demons. Every part, accordingly, of this comprehensive formulary aimed a death-blow at some monstrous error or corruption predominant either in the Jewish or Gentile world. It gathered up into itself the leading essentials of Christianity, and impressed them upon the new disciple under the solemn rite of baptism.

This verse has been adduced in support of the Trinity. It has been thought that Jesus designed to give a high prominence to that doctrine, by putting it forward in the words by which baptism was to be administered to his disciples. But two remarks may be made here. The first is, that no peculiar importance could have been attached to these identical words, for the Apostles used different ones in performing the sacred ceremony. Acts viii. 16, x. 48, xix. 5. The words of Christ are to be viewed rather as a general model than as an invariable formula to be used on every occasion; in the same manner that the Lord's prayer contains the fundamentals of devotion, yet was not intended to be the sole form in which our supplications should be offered to Heaven. Acts i. 24, 25. The second remark is, that the coupling of the Father with the Son and Holy Spirit in the same sentence does not necessarily imply that they possess *equality*, any more than the expression, in 1 Chron. xxix. 20, *worshipped the Lord and the king*, shows that the king was equal to the Lord. Is not worship as solemn as baptism? Neither does the joining of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son prove that it possesses a distinct personal existence, any more than the connexion, in Acts xx. 32, of *the word of his grace* with *God*, in the same sentence, evinces, that, because one is a person or conscious being, the other is also. See also Eph. vi. 10, to the same point. In 1 Cor. x. 2, we read that "all were baptized unto Moses," but no one has ever thought of arguing from that expression, that Moses was God. Why, then, should it be inferred from this formula, that the Son is God, and the Spirit is God, because the disciple is to be baptized into their name, or into a profession of them, if, as has been proved above, there were reasons why they should be introduced in close connexion with the Father, as more definitely describing the character of the Gospel? One who did not believe in Christianity, a Gre-

Digitized by Google

observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

---

cian sage, a Jewish priest, a Mohammedan, a modern Deist, might be baptized into the Father, for they severally believe in one God. But only a Christian could sincerely espouse the faith of the Father and *the Son and the Holy Spirit*.

20. *Teaching them*, i. e. giving them instruction in the doctrines and duties communicated and enjoined by Christ. — *I am with you alway*. Jesus was with his Apostles of that age, in a peculiar manner, and personally appeared more than once after his ascension. He was with them in spirit, he sent them the Comforter, and was an Advocate for them with the Father. In a figurative sense, he would be with his followers of every land and age, in the spirit and power of the religion which he had lived to exemplify and died to seal, and which exerts a vital energy in saving man, in proportion as it unites his spirit, in a living union, as of the branch with the vine, and the limbs with the trunk, to him the Great Head. — *Unto the end of the world*. The more approved translation, according to the original, is, unto the end of the age, or the Jewish economy, and the establishment of the Christian religion, after which miracles ceased, and Christ appeared no more personally to his Apostles and disciples, as he had done before. Acts vii. 55, 56, ix. 17; 1 Cor. xi. 23. — The *Amen* is rejected by Griesbach, as of doubtful authority.

As we study the history of the life, death, and resurrection of our beloved Master, and enter more deeply into the spirit of his Divine instructions, and into sympathy with his beautiful character, we shall find new reasons for the hope that is in us, new revelations of the truths of the spiritual world, and new motives to virtue and holiness. The Gospels can never tire by often reading, nor grow insipid by familiarity; because they are a storehouse of spiritual truth and influence, of inexhaustible richness and capacity, and contain the life of the Son of God. They are equal to the highest, rarest experiences of the human soul, and can never be outrun by the wisdom of the wise, nor the virtues of the good. They meet our wants as sinners, animate our hopes, console our sorrows under every condition, and point the way to everlasting life. In them God breathes upon our minds, and impregnates us with his own spirit. In them his Son lives, and teaches, and dies to reconcile us to him, to make known the way of forgiveness to the sinner, and to invite and constrain us, by all the motives the universe can supply, or the soul feel, to lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and to run with patience the race that is set before us, and to be followers and heirs of God as dear children. May they thus draw us up, with divine attractions, from earth and sin, from the darkness of ignorance, the grovellings of lust and passion, and "the Slough of Despond," into the purer air, and the clearer light, of a spiritual creation, a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and beauty, and truth, and lead us onward to the abodes of everlasting love and blessedness!

END OF VOL. I.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google